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FOR JUNE

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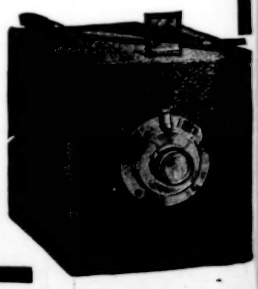

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JUNE, 1914

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Trying to Bat Over 300

In the December Black Cat we pointed out the ridiculous practice of magazines buying stories and paying for them at so much per word. The readers' value of any short story is not measured by how many words it took the author to produce his effect but how much interest he crammed into his effort. We intimated then that the average editor usually got what he paid for—words, words, words. Since the appearance of the December Cat two big magazines have editorially expressed themselves in a similar vein. In the May Metropolitan the editors in a plea for *short* short stories say:

"The length of many stories is unjustifiable. If a story can be told in twenty-five hundred words, the author only mars its effect by spinning it out to five or six thousand. The art of relating swift and vital short stories is a neglected one. The element of brevity plays a part in the special thrill which we get from some of the masterpieces of Poe, Merimee, Kipling, O. Henry."

In his "Shop Talk" of the April "Munsey," Mr. Munsey also takes a verbal fall out of the wordy author and criticises the practice of paying authors not by the strength or appeal of their story but by its length; a practice which encourages padding, monotonous descriptions and other tricks of the writing craft.

If anything these delayed acknowledgments of the true value and appeal of short stories are an endorsement of the editorial idea behind the Black Cat. They probably go far to explain the lasting success of this little magazine which in its long career has steered clear of the fallacies to which some of our editors are now awakening. It has been, and will continue to be, our ambition to give you every month nine or ten short, quick moving stories with a varied appeal that a magazine of this character must have to retain its readers. The increasing news stand sale of the last few months warrants us in believing we are succeeding, in a measure, to live up to the slogan on our cover. Not every story, or possibly not every number, in your judgment, hits the bulls eye. But just recall, even the mighty Wagner does not make a hit *every* time he comes to bat! And in the big leagues 300 per cent is a fat batting average.

* * * * *

In the July Cat we will have a rattling funny story, "Clothes Don't Make the Man" — just the kind of mental food we naturally turn to in the early dog days of the summer. It has not been our good fortune to publish such a quick moving, farcical story in a long while as this one which has to do with father's September Morn appearance in a big hotel and the doings of an indulged, scapegoat son. For speed it is another "Officer 666." The story is by M. B. Phipps, and we plan to follow this effort with more work by the same author. Luke McLuke will be present with some hot weather observations, so we feel confident you will find plenty of fun in the July Cat.

The Black Cat

Vol. XIX JUNE, 1914 No. 9

Over the Great Divide

BY ARTHUR LEEDS

We announce this unusual story as "the best story found in any magazine this month." In plot it is big and new. A man who once wore a number in place of a name, is hurrying across the continent, with his wife, answering the lure of "easy money." Before he reaches his destination his soul is bathed in a world-old miracle and he doesn't keep his appointment.

BEG your pardon, sir. You'll have t' excuse me fer wakin' yuh; but are you a—a medical man?"

The voice of the speaker was at once hesitating, apologetic, anxious, and eagerly inquiring.

The man addressed, roused from a sound sleep, not realizing what had been said to him, but with an instantaneous recollection of how he had once been robbed of his pocket-book while sleeping on a train, instinctively slipped his hand under his pillow and clutched the Colt automatic lying there. Then he raised himself on his elbow and looked towards the parted curtains of the berth.

"Eh? What? What's the matter?" he jerked out, in a voice still thick with slumber.

"I was askin', sir," the half-frightened voice replied, "if you was a medical man."

"Oh!" And then: "Yes, I am a physician, if that's what you mean. What do you want?"

"I just guessed you was a medical man o' some kind when I seen you readin' that book about 'Abominable Surgery' before the porter made up your berth last night. It's a shame t' disturb yuh, doctor, but Molly—my wife, I mean,—is very sick. It came on her sudden and unexpected—really," half apologetically, "an' she's pretty bad right now. I'm afraid—"

"One moment," the physician interposed, "what came on suddenly? What is your wife's trouble?"

"That's it, doc—I mean, doctor—her trouble. Her great trouble." The voice was a strange mixture of eager anxiety and relief at the aptness of the doctor's question which had made the answering of that question so much the easier. "It came on like I said, sudden and unexpected. Of course, Molly an' me both had a sort o' idea *about* when t' expect—"

"But, good heavens, man, what made you dream of attempting a railroad journey with your wife in such an extremely critical condition? You say you had an idea. Only very important business—"

"Well, that's just it, doc—er, doctor. I—we gotta make Frisco by the twenty-second. That is, I gotta make it; an'

I couldn't persuade Molly t' stay behind an' come on after—after—you un'erstand. You see, we been away from each other quite a bit since we was married. We been in the East together about a year, now; but before that I was away from her for—two—years. So now she says she ain't a-goin t' leave me go away from her again. I didn' want her t' make this here trip with me; I could 'a' gone back an' got her after I'd finished—er, landed the job I'm after, couldn't see that proposition fer a minute. Natcherly, a man don't want t' leave his wife when she's—when she needs him by her; but this'll be a great job if we—if I can land it. With this comin' on, it looks like we gotta watch out for the future more'n ever."

"Quite so," the physician agreed. "Which berth are you occupying?"

"Lower six. There's a young lady has lower nine that came on at Pueblo. She was talkin' t' Molly fer a while las' night while I was in the smoker. From the way Molly said she talked, I reckon she must be a nurse. She's with Molly now."

While Kiernan had been talking, the other man had left his berth, and he stood now attired in trousers and coat over his pajamas, with a pair of leather slippers on his feet.

"Just sit down there on the edge of my berth," he said. "You're nervous and excited. I'll have a look at your wife. Your name is—"

"Kiernan—Thomas Kiernan. An' you're—"

"Dr. Stephen Hodder. I'll go to her now; you remain here. Possibly it's not so serious as you think."

The physician moved quietly up the aisle of the car in the direction of lower six. The husband sat down on the edge of the berth as directed, his face between his hands, elbows propped on his knees.

"This is Mrs. Kiernan?" he heard the doctor inquire in a firm but gently soothing voice. Then as the young woman who had been sitting inside the curtains on the edge of the berth where his wife lay got up and stepped into the aisle: "I am Dr. Hodder. I have just been talking with your husband. He tells me—"

The physician took the place on the edge of the berth which the young woman had just vacated, and the curtains closing about him cut off the remainder of his speech from the listening man.

By this time, however, there were several listening men, and listening women, also. Kiernan realized that almost everyone in the sleeper was awake; and, certain that before long they would all be, he became painfully conscious of their eyes fastened upon him. It was not that he resented their staring at him; but it seemed that the danger threatening the white-faced little woman in lower six was intensified, or, at any rate, made real and certain, by the fact that so many others were looking on, aware that there was something wrong. As a matter of fact he was horribly nervous and wrought up; but even to himself, he tried not to admit it.

"Damn them! I wish they'd quit it. I wish they was all doped! They get on a guy's nerves rubberin' that a-way. Just a bunch o' white faces with eyes a-starin' at yuh, and green velvet all 'round 'em."

The words gritted through his tightly-set teeth; it was not until he had stopped muttering that he realized he was speaking loud enough for some of those nearest him to hear what he was saying. The stout lady in the berth directly across from where he was sitting gave a little sniff of disgust and suddenly withdrew her head.

"Pardon me, ma'am," he hastened to

apologize. "I'm kind o' broke up an' nervous. I—I didn' mean you."

Again he had spoken almost without knowing that he was doing so. Half ashamed, he drew back into the berth and closed the curtains in front of his face. In the dark, though, he seemed to see his wife, lying with widely staring eyes and twitching lips, clutching the edge of the sheet in her slim, white fingers. His hand reached out to switch on one of the little electric lights at each end of the berth; then he drew it back and stepped out into the aisle.

He made his way to where the young woman who had been with his wife stood talking with the Pullman porter.

"I beg pardon," he ventured, still with the apologetic and half-frightened tone in which he had first addressed the doctor. "You was with Molly—my wife—when I came outa the smoker last night; but you left her just as I come up. I thought she said you was a nurse."

"I am a nurse. I'm going through to Salt Lake City. We got into conversation while you were out, and I—it struck me—that is, I don't know what made me feel certain—that—that it would be sooner than she had expected. I could see that she hadn't expected it would be *quite* so soon.

"Oh, God!" Kiernan jerked out, brokenly. "It is my fault fer ever allowin' her t' start on this trip with me. But she would go; she *would* stick t' me! Molly's the kinda woman that'd follah a fellah and stick with him clean through hell, if he had t' go! Oh! excuse *me!* I ain't quite meself t'night. That's I don't know how many times I've had t' excuse meself fer sayin' things I hadn't oughta say."

"I understand," the nurse assured him; "naturally, you're nervous and excited at the thought of your wife's trouble. But then, even if it is to be now, there is no more than the ordinary amount of danger. She's a pretty strong-looking little woman."

"She is—all but her heart; that kinda worries me at times. An' then, she's only a kid, 's far as age goes. We ain't been married quite three years, an' she wasn't hardly seventeen then. Do yuh think I could speak t' the doctor?"

"Why, yes, I should think so. I dare say that by this time—"

She was interrupted by the doctor himself stepping quickly but softly up the aisle and laying his hand upon her arm.

"Excuse me, Miss—I don't know your name—"

"Arnold," she said.

"Ah, yes Miss Arnold. I am Doctor Hodder, of Denver. I understand that you are a nurse?"

She replied in the affirmative, and the doctor looked at Kiernan.

"Will you go to your wife for a moment? She wishes to speak with you. Then, as soon as she asks you to, come back to me, here. Remember, come back to me when she says to—if you want to prevent her from being very sick."

Kiernan glanced at the physician with an expression of mingled nervous stupidity and dull resentfulness at the man's way of addressing him. He did not quite understand. Then, quietly, he turned and approached lower six berth.

"Was you wantin' me, Molly?" he half whispered. "What did th' doctor say?"

It was dark in the berth. The woman had asked the doctor to turn off the lights so that her husband might not notice her greater pallor and the twitching of her face and hands. She did not reply immediately; she seemed to be pondering what she wanted to say. The man reached out in the darkness and found one of her hands. It was covered

by a cold sweat. He bent over and laid his cheek against hers; a long wisp of hair clung to it damply.

"Why, kid," he said, thickly, "yer face is all wet. Are yuh too hot?"

"No—no, I'm rather cold. Oh, but I don't need anything more over me, really! Listen, Tom, please—bend down close to me. The doctor says he thinks it will be now—soon. He wants to stay with me for a while, anyway, and he doesn't want anyone else to talk with me. He says he thinks that maybe I've been worried by something, and that the worrying has—has affected me in this way. I *have* been worrying, Tom, but I didn't tell *him* so. You know what I mean, dear. You mean so well, Tom. You love me—I know that. You want—" She stopped, and for several seconds she gripped the sheet tightly with her right hand, clinging tightly to his hand with her left. The pain racked her; but she bit her lip and allowed no sound to come from between her set teeth. He thought she had paused in order to think what to say to him; and he attributed the tight clutch of her hand to nervousness.

"You want to make me comfortable," she continued. "You want to give me plenty to eat and wear—and the baby, too, when it comes. You do mean so well, Tom, dear; but think how the money has been made—in the past. Think how we've both suffered in the three short years since we were married. Think how happily we might have lived together in those two years that you were—away from me."

"Quit it, Molly," he whispered, huskily. "Don't talk about that now. That's all past, kid—all forgotten!"

"But what's ahead, Tom? Wait! Don't, dear; don't lie to me! You're going to—I can feel it. And it's not because you don't love me; it's because you *do*. Ah, Tom, a woman understands. And then, *I know*. I've read the letter from Hamlin!"

The man started as if he had been struck in the face with a whip.

"Molly! Fer God's sake! Where! When?"

"In Denver, the day we stopped over. Oh, it doesn't matter just how I got to know. But, Tom, think—please! Hamlin says he'll land you on Easy Street for the rest of your life, if you'll only join him in Frisco by the twenty-second. Are you quite sure, dear, that he won't land you somewhere else? Are you certain—" the woman's voice was slow, impressive, pleading—"that he won't separate us again—part us for a longer time than he did before? You know, Tom, Hamlin always looks out for himself first; and you're easily lead, because you think it will give you the chance to make me comfortable and happy. I can be comfortable without that kind of money, Tom; and I'm happy just as long as you're with me—and safe. But if they ever take you away from me again—"

She gave a little moan of pain, and he felt her grasp his hand tightly in both of hers.

"Wait! It's all right!" she assured him, though her words came jerkingly and with apparent effort. "Only now, dear, I want you to go back to the doctor, as he said. Do, please; do just what the doctor tells you to do."

He gave her his promise, though he did not quite understand what she meant. He understood, however, what she had meant when she spoke of being separated from him again. Her pleading words seemed to be burning into his brain; there was a strange, dull, aching sensation in his heart that he had never known before.

"Ah, yes, there you are! I was just going to call you. Now, Mr. Kiernan, Miss Arnold and I are going to look

after your wife just as if she were in her home. You see, we're not *just* sure what to expect, though we feel that it's best to be ready." Following the wishes of the sick woman the doctor lied unblushingly. "So I want you to go back into the smoking-compartment of the car behind this one, and to remain there until I come to get you. You understand? Stay there until I come to you—it is your wife's wish. In the *next* car—not this one."

"But, doctor—"

"If I am to be of any service to your wife, you must not delay me. Please do as I say."

Kiernan regarded the physician with eyes that resembled those of a dumb animal, hesitant about doing its master's bidding. For a quarter of a minute he stood gazing into the calm, strong face; then he turned and walked unsteadily to the rear of the car, and so passed on into the one behind.

The train slowed down and presently stopped. From where he sat he could not see the name on the station; but a time-table showed him that at three twenty-eight they should be leaving the flag-station of Granite; they were evidently a few minutes late.

"If I am to be of any service to your wife, you must not delay me." Had the doctor meant that Molly's illness was only a sudden weakness, attendant upon her condition, which he must hasten to remedy? Or, had he meant—Kiernan felt his pulse quicken and his breath come hard—that this was to be the end of the long period of anxious expectation, the climax of his distressed uncertainty and of Molly's anticipation, that calm, patient waiting endured by every woman who stands day by day, week after week, and month after month, between the Angel of Life and the Angel of Death, clasping the hand of each, looking in turn into the face of each, waiting, trusting, longing, but never knowing from which hand hers will be disengaged; never flinching, but never able to guess if the warm, friendly hand of the Angel of Life will soon draw her from the grasp of the other, and away into the great happiness that she feels will be hers when the little life sleeping under her heart shall sleep within her embrace, or whether the icy relentless hand of Death's dark messenger will tighten upon hers, leading her away from life, away from happiness, away, even, from the new life, to bring which into the world she must sacrifice her own.

It was that! Kiernan was sure of it now. He had been pretty certain that it must be that when Molly's half-repressed moaning had awakened him. But the words of the doctor, and the fact that he had allowed him to go to his wife and had himself stayed at a distance quietly talking with the nurse, had given him the impression that, after all, it could not be what he had at first thought. Still, come to think of it, it could not be—yet! For it to be now would mean that the result—that Molly—!

No! No! It could not be as bad as that! He had been a pretty bad lot, in a good many ways, he was willing to admit; but he felt sure that God would not punish him to that extent; he would not strike him through the innocent little woman who had always tried so hard to make him a better man. He quite expected to be punished, but not—that way. Not here, upon earth, and while he had life—and Molly.

But—*had* he Molly? Right now, at this moment, *had* he Molly? The doctor had sent him in here, a whole car behind the one in which she was lying. Why, so that he should be unable to hear—anything? Why else? *Had* he Molly? Was she still there, weak and standing on

the edge—the very edge—of the great chasm, perhaps, but still there, holding out her hand to lead him away from the path of temptation and wrong-doing, patient, self-sacrificing, loving as she had ever been; or was it all over, and was he—alone?

"Why don't they come to me? Why don't they send for me?" he cried out in his agony of mind. "Why did they —why did she want me to stay away in here, away from her?"

"A low, nerve-shattering scream, seemingly close at hand, set the blood dancing in his temples, and he sprang to his feet. Then, as he realized that it had only been the grinding of the car wheels against a switch in the steel track, he sat down again, trembling like a frightened child.

Another station. It was fast growing light outside. Night was lifting her mantle from the slumbering mountains, and he could dimly make out the rugged outlines of the Mosquito Range. Beneath them, as he knew, Leadville still slept. Then this was Malta; he had been there in the car alone for over half an hour. And, in that half hour—Molly!

The train started up again, and mingled with the grinding of the wheels as it gained in speed, Kiernan seemed to hear his wife's words: "Think how happily we might have lived together in those two years that you were—away from me."

It was true! Two century-long years! Away from her, snatched from her by the hand of the law, hardly three months after she had become his wife! Little more than a hundred miles back on this same line was the town with the great State Penitentiary—his home for those two years that they had been apart. All the wonderful, natural beauty of the Royal Gorge, with its granite and mica walls and the winding, foaming river, rendered more picturesque by the great, full, silver moon overhead, had been powerless to make him forget the two years spent in the living tomb at Cañon City.

He had gone out into the vestibule alone and watched, urged by a grim and memory-torturing fascination, until the train had rolled by that point where, sharing the silvery moonlight as if it were not a place that seemed to him a portion of the Inferno, not belonging to the otherwise good and beautiful world, he could see the grey and forbidding outlines of the prison. A number had flashed into his mind—a number to which he used to answer, as a dog answers its master's call; and then, unconsciously, he had folded his arms. With a curse, he had dropped them to his sides again; never again, he swore solemnly, would he fold his arms at the bidding of another man. He had closed his eyes, shutting out the sight that both fascinated and terrified him; and when he opened them again the train was rushing into the Grand Cañon of the Arkansas. Could it be possible, he had wondered, vaguely, that this wonderful, awe-inspiring work of the Creator was so close to that man-made hell that he had gazed upon only a few minutes before?

But there were other prisons where he was going! Dozens of them were waiting to receive him along the Pacific coast—if he chose to risk entering them. Now, however, it was not the fear of the prisons that oppressed him. He felt himself filled with an overpowering longing to be with his wife again—close to her, where he could hear the beating of her heart in the stillness of the night, the sound of her voice in the day, and where he could know that, whatever the past might have held for which now there remained regret, there was still the future open to them in which to live, love, and be happy.

There was a cold sweat on his brow now; why, why didn't they come to him? If the worst had happened, why didn't they let him know? If all were well, why didn't they come and relieve this terrible, overpowering anxiety?

Poor little Molly! "I *have* been worrying, Tom; but I didn't tell him so." Worrying because of him! Tortured night and day by the thought that he might be torn from her again—this time, for how long? If Hamlin's scheme failed, and they were caught, it would be fifteen years apiece, at least.

Fifteen years! If the baby lived, it would grow up without ever knowing that its father was alive—he felt sure that Molly would spare it the disgrace of knowing the truth; and he would never feel the touch of its little hands, or laugh as it crowed when he played with it upon his knee. He would be—a number again.

The train had just passed another small station; he guessed it must be Leadville Junction. Every station brought him nearer to his destination, nearer to San Francisco, Hamlin, and another crime. He sprang to his feet and brought his tightly-clenched fist down on the sill of the window.

"Hamlin can go to hell!" he almost shouted. "I'm through with him!"

"I beg your pardon!"

Kiernan swung round on his heel and faced the physician. He saw that the calm face was rather pale, with a strained, troubled look in the eyes. Kiernan felt that he must know the worst, or whatever the doctor had to report, at once.

"It was that, doctor? She's been through it all? Then—oh! Why don't yuh tell me? Please, tell me!"

"Gently! Gently, my friend! Now, then," laying his strong, gentle hand on Kiernan's shoulder, "you may go to your wife, but I caution you to be very quiet with her. Do not excite her; and, although she will be anxious to, don't talk to her too long at present. She must have complete rest. We'll cross the Great Divide presently, and by half-past eight we'll be in Glenwood Springs. There she can be transferred to a hotel. It will be rather a delicate job moving her; but she'll be able to rest there and get the proper treatment and attention."

Kiernan breathed a deep sigh of relief. Then it was not yet—what he had feared. Molly was pretty sick—that much he felt sure of; but she was not going to have to suffer sooner than she had expected.

"We had rather a tough time of it for a while. Miss Arnold's a splendid little assistant," the doctor continued. "But your wife will be all right, now, so you can go straight in and tell her how thankful you are."

Even yet poor Kiernan failed to understand.

"How long do you think she'll have to rest there, doctor?" he asked anxiously.

The physician looked at him narrowly. Then, being as quick to see that Kiernan did not understand as the other was slow to do so, he answered, smiling:

"Well, of course—I should say for ten days, at least. Now, don't you think you'd better go to her at once?"

But Kiernan had started before the doctor had quite finished speaking. He paid no attention to the few passengers who were sitting in their berths watching him; he did not even see the heads thrust out between the green curtains that walled the aisle of the car. He went directly to lower six.

There was no light in the berth. That end of the car was still comparatively dark; the blinds in the other berths were pulled down.

"Molly!" he whispered.

"Yes, Tom, dear."

"Wait, Molly; I want t' see yuh. Gee, Molly, I was 'most afraid I'd never hear yuh call me again."

He reached across and gently raised the blind nearest to her head a few inches; the reflection of the newly risen sun fell across the pillow.

"My God, kid, what did they do t' yuh? Yuh look jest awful!"

Her face had only a little more color in it than the pillow on which it lay. Her brown hair was matted about her temples; and the white brow was furrowed with tiny, hair-like lines. But in the face there was a look of contentment and absolute happiness such as he had never seen in that of any other woman before—not even in hers on the day when she had met him in Chicago after he got through being a number and went back to claim her again.

He laid his hand gently on her forehead and bent over to kiss her. Then he started back as if shot, striking his head heavily against the upper berth; for a tiny, tremulous wail came from just beneath his elbow.

"Molly! Kid! It's a—" His voice was vibrant with excitement and unspeakable wonder.

"Yes, Tom, dear. It's a baby—*he's* our baby!"

"Let's see it, kid. Aw, let's see—"

With a rush of air and the echo of grinding wheels the train entered the tunnel on the crest of Tennessee Pass. It was totally dark in the berth again; even the lights in the car did not penetrate the curtains at his back.

Molly's arm—the one that was not encircling the baby—was raised; and Molly's hand drew Kiernan's head down until his ear was close to her lips.

"You won't be able to join Hamlin, now, will you, Tom, dear? The doctor says I must have two weeks' rest in Glenwood Springs. You're not sorry, are you, Tom? Maybe you'll be able to meet him afterwards—"

"Hamlin be— Say! Fergit Hamlin, kid—please. Th' only date I got now is with you."

The woman gave a contented little sigh. "We're just crossing the Divide, ain't we, Tom?"

"Yes, kid," he answered.

"Hamlin started you on the wrong road back in Chicago. Then, in Denver, he saw you sentenced for two years for a crime that he really committed. All that was back there, dear, miles and miles behind us; and it happened, oh, a hundred years ago—didn't it, Tom?"

"Naw, kid; yer all wrong. All that never happened at all. We're just a couple o' them emigrants strikin' out fer a new home in th' West. When we get where we're goin'—t' Santa Barbara—Uncle Dave'll take care o' us, an' help me t' get a start in something worth while. He's well fixed, Uncle Dave is; an' he don't know nothin' about—them two years. We've crossed th' Divide, kid; I reckon we crossed it th' minute I seen what yuh got tucked up there."

The train had left the tunnel and was rushing on over the first lap of its race down the Pacific Slope. The man looked long and wistfully into the face of the baby then into that of his wife. He bent over, half afraid, and quietly kissed the tiny, red face of the child. Then he pressed a lingering kiss upon the lips of the woman.

"It's a pretty baby, ain't it, kid?" he whispered, smiling down at her.

And the woman smiled in return.

Muldoon

BY M. WOODRUFF NEWELL

Here is a corking story of Alaska and one of God's rough diamonds who knew how to die. It is a long short story for us to publish but we think you will agree it is worth every inch of white paper it covers.

ULDOON slunk into Illion furtively, early in June, between nightfall and morning. He had evidently come overland from nobody knew where, and nobody cared.

He hid for weeks in an old cabin on the edge of the town, venturing in only at long intervals.

He was short and misshapen, with long hairy arms that hung grotesquely backward. His face was old and scarred. His tongue had a touch of the brogue, especially when he was drunk; and the saloons knew him first.

There were other derelicts in Illion, —refuse thrown out from Skaguay and Dawson as they pulled up into civilization and begat law and order, but Muldoon was different. He was shambling, forlorn, afraid of everything, like a battered, homeless dog; yet now and then something flashed up, like the flicker of a soul still alive.

Illion was a brutal little coast town. Before Dan Boissert struck gold up the Kuwak Creek it had been but a tent town. It was not much more than that now.

Dan Boissert and "French" Kellew and one or two others, were all that kept it from disintegrating, or shooting itself out of existence.

Boissert was in the forties. He was all that poor Muldoon was not—big-boned, strong, a fighter, yet sane and long-headed. He was rough yet tender-hearted. By rude law he was Mayor. When anything official had to be done he did it. Otherwise Illion ran itself. When Kuwak Creek panned out its last of gold, Illion would vanish.

Boissert gave Muldoon some clothes and money, and after a while found him some odd jobs at carpentry which he did well.

Then Muldoon became his slave. Whatever good there was left in him laid fast hold of Boissert. And it was Boissert, and Kellew, and P'tit Jean who first heard his story.

They had been playing cards in the back yard of a saloon.

Perhaps it was the velvet warmth of the night,—it was the middle of the short summer,—or the brooding softness of the sky, or perhaps it was only that he must always tell, as long as he lived, wherever he might go. Perhaps it always lay there, close to his tongue, an ugly tale which he might hide for awhile, but which must eventually come forth and show itself, like murder.

He had been bragging foolishly, and they had led him on, P'tit Jean, who lived by his cards, Kellew, and Boissert.

As he grew drunker his bravado died like the light from a flickering candle.

Once or twice he jumped up in a sort of panic and looked back of him into the dark garden.

P'tit Jean gave him a friendly thrust at last.

"Ha, Ha!" he roared in his big bull

voice, "he is nervous, like a woman,—see heem jump."

But Muldoon did not laugh. "Heard a noise," he whimpered, and his hands trembled around his glass.

They listened with him, pretending to a solemn gravity, their heads close together over the cheap pine table.

Then Muldoon began to talk; his voice thick and low, as though afraid that something that they could not see was just behind them listening.

"We were in the Magda Islands. I'd enlisted out from Frisco. I'd been in some fighting. I hadn't been afraid; that was straight fighting. There was more coming. We started out that morning with two days' rations. We tramped all day in the sun. God, that sun! We'd been the only things that moved. Even the lizards lay like dead. The smell of the weeds was like fire.

"I'd had fever and itch but I was young and strong. Most of the other boys were worse than me. By night we'd struck in among the cane, and we camped there, between two hills.

"I didn't sleep. I just listened and kept on listening. Did you ever start like that, listening for something, maybe you don't know what? By and by it begins to get you. It began to get me, too. I'd never been afraid before. I felt what was coming, I guess, like you feel a thundershower sometimes. At times the leaves moved,—just a little, and the cane, too, though there wasn't a breath of wind, and sometimes I heard steps, soft,—but I couldn't see anything."

He stopped and drank. Nobody spoke. He went on again after a minute.

"The boys were done up. Sure, they'd had a hard march. They slept but I couldn't. I kept thinking I heard those brown devils. You never see 'em till they spring on you. Then it's too late. They leave what's left of you to the ants and the worms, and sometimes you ain't all dead, either. I'd enlisted so I could see the world, and I wasn't afraid of real fighting. I could fight what I could see but you can't see them. The Fear was beginning to get me good."

He looked across at Boissert. "Was you ever afraid?" he whispered. Boissert shook his head.

"It was most morning, but dark. I got up and went over to the nearest sentry. He was my bunk mate back in quarters. His name was Randolph. He drawled when he talked, for he was from the Carolinas.

"'I'm going up the hill a ways,' I said; 'I can't sleep no more.'

"So he let me go. I followed up a narrow trail that led out of the cane. I wasn't so afraid when I was on the move. Things began to stir in the bushes,—birds, and little lizards, and lots of little bugs that live in those hot countries. It gets light there, quick, like when you strike a match.

"Just as the light came I looked back. I wasn't up only a little way, but I could see 'em—God Almighty! they were everywhere, like brown snakes, crawling and running through the cane. I'd got through just in time. The boys weren't a handful for that swarm. I started to go back—but there wasn't any use in that. I got sick, too, and I could n't see. I crawled up higher, on my belly, and hid under some bushes.

"Once I looked and saw spots of flame, and the shine of a *bolo*. I didn't look again. I stuffed my ears full of grass too, so that I couldn't hear."

He lurched over the table heavily, and groaned. Nobody moved or said anything.

"By and by I crawled back, after they'd gone. Some of the boys were still alive. But I didn't dare touch them.

Most of the rest were headless—all cut up—and—worse. I can't tell it all. The first one I came to was Randolph. His eyes were gone—but he wasn't dead."

P'tit Jean staggered to his feet. "Did you finish him?" he yelled.

"I was afraid to do anything. I'd crawl a ways, then I'd lie flat and listen—"

"You left your mate there like that? You didn't finish him?" P'tit Jean's hands were working mightily.

Boissert pushed him down again into his chair. "Shut up, you fool," he said. "Let him finish it."

"No, I didn't dare to do anything. I wouldn't have gone back that way at all but I didn't know how to find the trail to camp only by the way we'd come. Their town was ahead. I had to go back. But it didn't save me. They got me."

He straightened up suddenly, and his long arm swept the glass from the table. It crashed upon the wooden walk and broke noisily.

"They got me. They cut me up, here—and here. They cut off my toes, one at a time. They broke my shoulders. They made me like this, and this, and this," pointing to his various deformities, "then they threw me into a hole and left me to the ants." His voice broke.

"Toward night some of the boys from camp found me," his voice was low again. "And by and by they sent me to Frisco on sick leave. I never went back. I wasn't right. Sometimes I get sick nights, thinking about it." He whimpered.

"I get afraid and I run. I think I hear 'em coming through the cane. I see 'em too, and I see the boys all cut, and headless, and red with blood. I keep moving then. I ain't so afraid when I'm moving. That was four years ago. I've been all over the earth since then. I just keep moving, or the Fear'd get me. It's hell—"

"You d—— coward," P'tit Jean blazed.

Muldoon put his twisted arms over his face. "That's part of the hell, to know I'm a coward. I wasn't afraid before. Since then I'm afraid of everything. I hear Something coming back of me—sudden,—and I get sick. I can't remember now when I wasn't afraid, but if I was like that before, I'd never enlisted out from Frisco, would I? I was a carpenter in Frisco. I made good money, but I got restless, I wanted to see the world. I ain't forty yet, but those brown hellions broke me, they broke me."

He stumbled on, sagging over the table.

They left him contemptuously. They had gone hungry and cold, and faced death in many forms but they had never known fear as Muldoon knew it. They had no pity for this whelp who had hid in the bushes while his own bunk mate died by inches.

P'tit Jean was not slow in spreading the tale. After that Muldoon's path was not easy. Even Illion's worst despised him.

Boissert, too, found it difficult to stomach him, yet he trailed like some whipped malamute at his heels.

It was evidently a hard summer for Muldoon, especially after Boissert went up the Creek prospecting, with Kellew. He tried, doggedly, to follow, but Boissert sent him back.

No one wasted any pity now on his twisted arms or humped back. There were days when he ran crazily up and down the flimsy wharf, muttering to himself, but no one went to him.

This was the time when he would ordinarily have taken to the road again. He had come to Illion as he had un-

doubtedly come to hundreds of other towns, but here there was some one who had, for a while at least, been good to him. Here was something warm and human that held him.

Boissert and Kellew came back to camp early in August, their sacks full of gold dust. The town gradually filled up again with stragglers from the different diggings, and the saloons waxed fat on their prosperity.

Late that month a storm of wind and rain struck Illion suddenly and toppled over half of the flimsy shanties; but its worst it vented upon a big fishing vessel just outside.

A crowd gathered upon the steep bank, built fires there, and watched the ship slowly break up. It had a large crew. They were like black dots, where they clung awhile in the rigging.

After the sea had quieted down a boat was put out to find any who might be drifting about on the wreckage, but they found no one.

Late that night Boissert, whose cabin was near the wharf, awoke to hear somebody pounding upon his door.

It was Muldoon, dripping and exhausted, dragging in a lad who was apparently dead.

"Who killed him?" Boissert asked.

"Nobody. He's from the ship. He was tied to some planks. I was down there after the crowd had gone. I heard him, so I put out and towed him in."

Boissert showed his teeth. "You d—— liar, tell a good one."

The fellow soon opened his eyes.

"How'd you get ashore?" Boissert prodded.

"He saved me, him. I yelled, 'Mon Dieu'! I was most gone! I drifted all day. All the rest, gone, gone." He crossed himself.

"He brought you in, did he? Climbed down there to a boat, and went out and got you?"

"Yes, yes; he was a brave man, yes. He cut the rope. I was tied to a plank. I was most dead."

Boissert looked at Muldoon skeptically.

Muldoon was sitting crosslegged in the corner by the door. He was wet to the skin, and his teeth were chattering.

It was a big thing to do,—if he had done it.

Boissert brought him a glass of rum, at last, and watched him while he drank it. Then he brought him some dry clothes.

Boissert never did things by halves. Having at last accepted the tale, he spread the news royally, and by the next night, Muldoon was a hero.

Many men in Illion had done bigger deeds than this, but Muldoon's cowardice was so well known that this one act was enough to turn the tide of public feeling toward him.

And Muldoon,—confused at first by the turn of sentiment, adjusted himself quickly.

He basked in this new wave of popular approval. It had been many years since any one had shown him such friendliness.

Boissert led, as he always led, by buying him new clothes, and treating him to a dinner in the "Nugget." The rest of the men followed like sheep.

Muldoon took Franzblau,—the lad whom he had saved,—into his own shack, and began to teach him carpentry, and this, too, was good for him.

But his happy days were limited. Late one night, scarcely a month afterward, he awoke and ran screaming out of his cabin. Perhaps he had been dreaming of his day of torture,—perhaps he heard them again, coming through the cane,—the little brown men who had broken him.

Franzblau, dulled by sleep, heard him but did not follow him.

They found him in the morning, huddled up by the door of the "Nugget," trembling and crazed with the fear of that "Something" that nobody but himself ever saw.

That morning was his undoing. They filled him up generously at the bar. He had not been so drunk in a long time. In an hour he was as drunk as anyone could ever wish to be, and had pulled his house of cards down over his head.

He told the truth loudly, loquaciously. Franzblau had drifted in to shore, lashed to a plank.

Muldoon, wandering about, had stumbled over him. He had cut the ropes and brought him to consciousness.

Then, on a sudden inspiration, he had persuaded the lad to magnify the rescue, and they had quickly planned the yarn between them.

Franzblau, glad to be even alive, with the prospect of at least a roof over his head for a few weeks and enough to eat, would have undoubtedly agreed to almost anything at that moment. Everybody knew the rest.

Boissert was not there when Muldoon told the tale, but somebody hunted him up and brought him in.

Muldoon laughed at him foolishly as he stormed in at the bar. Muldoon was leaning against the wall, his head wagging, his crooked arms limp at his side.

"You said, 'You d—— liar,'" he repeated thickly. "But you believed it. That was the time I fooled everybody. I love you Boissert, but I fooled you; yes."

Boissert could hold himself in no longer. He struck, and Muldoon sprawled on the dirty floor. He lay there and whispered to himself.

But after all he was too poor a thing to touch, so Boissert kicked him into a corner where he would be out of the way, and treated the crowd. The joke was on him, and it did not set very well. He was proud of his leadership, and it hurt to have this old wreck make him a laughing stock.

Muldoon's glory had quite departed. The brief season in which he had seen a glimmer of brighter, saner days, was gone now.

He worked fitfully at odd jobs, just enough to hold body and soul together. He haunted Boissert still, but at a safe distance.

Evidently Boissert still drew him like a magnet, in spite of the derision which Boissert took no pains to hide.

The summer was gone now. Port closed in suddenly with ice, like the snap of a rat trap, and Illion settled down for the long cold night.

It was a hard winter, with much snow and ice, and bitter cold, and Illion had not looked far enough ahead. Toward spring provisions ran short. There was no pemmican, no flour, no bacon, and but a little dried fish.

For this Boissert blamed himself. He should have looked farther ahead. He had been through too many winters in this frozen country to have been caught napping like this.

The nearest place to which they could go for relief was Hauek, an Indian settlement to the northwest of them.

It was a long trail; but Boissert and Kellew and two half breeds started early one freezing day for Hauek.

At Fifty Mile one of the half breeds deserted, in the night, with his dog team.

At Thirty Mile Kellew froze his feet, and from there on to Hauek they could only make half time.

At Hauek they received scant welcome.

The Chilkoots had been a peaceable people, but they had little provision to spare. What they sold they parceled out grudgingly, and it was not nearly enough.

So Boissert and his two men slyly robbed two caches the night before they started back, and made a good getaway undetected.

For two days all went well. The dogs were rested and made good time, and the cold had abated several degrees.

Boissert sang as they went, and cracked his long whip over the dogs' backs.

But the third day, Kellew, at noonday, pointed suddenly backward. "Look," he said.

The half breed knew without looking back. He leaned forward and stretched out his long snaky whip over the malamutes' backs. "Chilkoots," he said.

Boissert said nothing. He had been expecting just this thing.

It was a good race. They had the start, but they were travelling heavy; Illion needed all that could be saved for her; so they cast away nothing at first.

Hour after hour they went steadily on, but the Chilkoots were gaining.

Kellew lightened his sled first, then took over part of what the other two had been carrying, so that all three might travel faster.

Again the distance shortened a little between them, and more of the pemmican, and the stolen fish was thrown off their teams.

When night came they slept by turns, one always keeping watch. But when daylight came the Chilkoots were in plain sight.

They were still a day's journey from Illion, and much may happen in a day.

What did happen was a snowstorm, thick and blinding.

And here Boissert became separated from Kellew and the half breed.

The half breed had been ahead because he knew the trail, Kellew next, and Boissert last. The half breed had undoubtedly thrown off more of his load to enable him to go faster, for his speed suddenly increased. Kellew too, slipped away. He kept up with him, having slyly followed his example. But Boissert, still holding doggedly to the provisions, dropped steadily back, and before he realized it, was alone, on a trail he scarcely knew, with Chilkoots probably close upon his heels, and everywhere around him, the stinging, blinding snow.

For a long, long time he forged ahead steadily, hearing nothing, seeing nothing but the snow. Then the dogs began to fail him, and he grew drowsy. Kellew's treachery, too, had taken the heart out of him.

He travelled in a circle, hour after hour, until he could keep awake no longer. Then he rolled off the sled into the snow and slept.

Kellew and the half breed, in the meantime, had come into Illion more dead than alive, and with barely enough provisions to eke out the winter, even with the closest figuring.

Boissert, Kellew declared, had died on the way, and they had buried him. His dogs, too, had broken through the ice over the Creek, and been drowned.

Both of them bore signs of their hard journey,—bleeding feet, and frozen hands, and blinded eyes. No one, apparently, doubted their story at the time, but Muldoon.

He stole a dog team, and without a word to anyone started over the trail to Fifty Mile River. Who can know what he thought starting out over the frozen white trail; perhaps a confused hope of at last winning back Boissert's favor, of coming back a hero, to Illion. Above all, there must have been the affection for Boissert, the strong memory of Boissert's friendliness when he first slunk into Illion. It was a dog's devotion to a master.

The dog team must have died or deserted him for he was afoot when a

Tinneh Indian passed him, and coming later to the "Nugget" told of the crazy man wandering around the Creek calling for Kellew.

Kellew's guilty conscience immediately turned traitor. His confusion and evident fright started Boissert's friends to questioning him. He tried to brazen it out, but being afraid that Boissert was alive and that he was found out, he broke down miserably, and it did not take long to get the truth out of him.

They locked him up, set a watch over him, and started for the Creek, five dog sleds, two men on a sled.

But it was only Muldoon that they found. His face was black with frost, and he could not walk because of his frozen feet. He tried to stop them, but only two men delayed to hear his story. The rest went by him contemptuously. "He's up there," he mumbled. "I could n't get him any further. There's Chilkoots ahead. I hid him under the bank, on the ice. I've dragged him since morning. Take me along and I'll show you—"

But they did not believe him. He had had a crazy spell after he heard that Boissert had died on the trail, and now he was imagining all this. They had swallowed one of his big yarns once. That was enough. So they swore at him, and went on with the others, and left him looking after them with his frozen black face, and dumb eyes.

After nearly half a day's search they had still found no trace of Boissert. Then, the two men, still wholly skeptical, yet not content to go back without doing everything that could be done, told Muldoon's story.

They traced the Creek back carefully, and there at last, they found Boissert where Muldoon had hidden him. He was almost dead. They worked over him fiercely, and as he began to come to himself they packed him onto a sled, and started back for Illion.

They had not gone far when he asked for Muldoon. Nobody said anything.

He roused himself mightily then. "God, did the Chilkoots get him!"

He raged at them as he got at the truth. "Afraid he was, a wreck and a coward, but he came out after me, when Kellew, with his streak of fat, had deserted to save his own skin. He dragged me for hours. He wouldn't let me sleep. He brought me brandy too, hadn't touched it himself in all those miles. God! where is he?"

He was beside himself with fear and helpless wrath at them, and at himself. "He's done it finally, done a man's deed, and this is what we give him. After that other inferno down on those Islands where they turned his wits, he risked it all over again for me; after I'd kicked him around like a dog."

They were pushing the dogs to the limit. They made good time, but they were too late. The Chilkoots had been there first.

He was still living, a sprawling, quivering heap on the frozen hillock where they had left him, but his eyes were gouged out, and his mouth was slit to both ears. His breath sucked through it noisily as water sucks into some hidden hollow between two rocks.

So, after a minute or two, somebody reached for a gun, and did what had to be done, quickly.

Boissert's great hands worked, and his chin dropped upon his chest. "My God!" he whispered, crossing himself. "At last he was a man, that Muldoon."

The Suicide of Wilkins

BY C. M. RAMAGE

Condemned to a long drawn out death from tuberculosis, the victim of a hasty doctor attempts to hasten the end and happily fails!

"SO poor old Bill has tuberculosis?" said Smithers.

"Yes; started for Arizona yesterday."

"No good!" said Smithers oracularly. "If I had tuberculosis I'd shoot myself and be done with it!"

"Oh, I say now!" protested little Wilkins. "It's curable is it not?"

"Curable? Not that anybody knows of! Look at Hunt! Look at Wilson! Think of a dozen others that we have known who have gone away for their lung's sake in the last ten years. They're all dead, ain't they?"

Yes, they were. The argument continued at some length; and as Wilkins balanced his books for the day he had an uncomfortable feeling. What if his cough should prove to be tuberculosis? He would see a doctor soon—maybe tomorrow. No, tonight—right away! A panic seized him and he hurried his work, put on his overcoat and hat, and sought a doctor.

Now, the chance which had led Wilkins to seek a doctor took him to the office of Doctor Mason. Doctor Mason was a well-trained young physician who had spent two years as assistant physician in a tuberculosis sanitarium. His work at this place had been mainly the examining of applicants for admission. Very naturally, most of the lungs he examined were affected by the dread disease or the people would not have been applying for entrance. The result was that Doctor Mason had gotten the idea that nearly every one had pulmonary tuberculosis. Further, he thought that in case of doubt, diagnose the case as one of tuberculosis; for the resulting treatment would do no harm.

He made Wilkins strip, and laid him on a table that looked like one Wilkins had once seen in an undertaker's establishment! He thumped him, made marks all over his chest with a blue pencil, and then listened at these marks with a lengthening face. Finally he said bluntly: "You have tuberculosis!" Wilkins fainted. Doctor Mason was pleased with the impression he had made.

"Now," said he, when Wilkins had been revived, "you seem to realize the seriousness of the terrible scourge which is killing one hundred and fifty thousand people every year in the United States! You probably do not know what a menace you are to those who may be associating with you. You must not —m-m-ble—not—and m-m-m—Wilkins was apparently listening; but he was not hearing a word. His thoughts were at the little cottage where his wife and Toodlems awaited his approach and his blighting kisses! Maybe they had already caught the disease from him! Oh, merciful Heavens! Smithers was right! He should put himself beyond the power of injuring them. What a wretch he would be to continue in their presence, spreading the dread disease in the air that she and Toodlems breathed! And chubby-legged Toodlems just learning to talk!

"As I was saying," continued the doctor, "your only chance for life depends

on a close observance of my directions. Avoid all exposure—m-m-m—ble must not—m-m-m-ble—" Wilkins was again oblivious of all things save the great horror of himself.

The doctor's impersonal oration at length closed; and as his voice ceased Wilkins came back to the present. Mechanically he said "yes" and "no" and "I don't know" to several questions, paid the doctor five dollars and went out.

Whither? Home? To give Sweetheart and Toodlems tuberculosis? Never! The river! Carbolic acid—anything would be better than that! But wait! What would Sweetheart do if he committed suicide? His insurance policies had a clause in them that prohibited suicide! She would be left penniless and Toodlems could not go to Yale!

The extent of his problem made him calm. Wilkins was a little man. He was a clerk. He would always be a clerk, probably. He had never faced a great problem before. His mind in this crisis seized as the great point that he must get away from his loved ones. Death was the only means offered; and the suicide must be adroitly covered up so that the companies would pay Sweetheart the insurance. He had ten thousand dollars on his life, and the cottage was paid for. What had the doctor said he must not do? Expose himself! Therefore, exposure would speedily end the matter! Wilkins felt a part of the great load lift from his heart and hurried home, formulating the remainder of his plans.

The little tan cottage, trimmed in neat brown, was brightly lighted as he came home through the November dusk. Toodlems made an animated silhouette in the window seat. Sweetheart came and stood beside him just at that moment, anxious because of Wilkins's lateness.

He straightened his shoulders and ran up the steps. Sweetheart threw open the door with a glad cry of welcome, while Toodlems shrieked, "Tum pay bear, Papa! Tum pay bear wif Toodlems!"

Wilkins brushed past them with an affected laugh and said: "No kisses this evening. Doctor told me I had—er—la—laryngous bronchitis, and that you and Toodlems would catch it if I kissed you, Sweetheart. It's not serious, dear, but until I shake it off I must not kiss either of you."

Sweetheart was aghast for an instant; and then, "Well, you needn't kiss Toodlems; but you must kiss *me!* Why! you must *always* kiss me!" and her lips trembled.

"And give you laryncatis bronchitis? I guess not!" said Wilkins emphatically, and coughing violently. "Then you'd kiss Toodlems and he might die!"

"Oh! But how long will you have that—what do you call it?"

"Not very long. I'll doctor it carefully. The doctor said—er—oh, I will tell you all about it after supper. I'm hungry now. Well Toodlems, have you been a good boy today?"

"Yeth, but ain't 'oo doin' to pay wif me?"

"Sure! But we'll have to play a new game! Daddy's sick. Now you go 'way over in the corner and Daddy will play sick bear. Whenever I come near you, you hit me with the broom!" This new game was a howling success.

Sweetheart very soberly put the supper on the table. The meal was a trifle constrained, though Wilkins talked rapidly and tried to make them laugh.

"Tiss me good-night, Daddy," drowsily said Toodlems after supper.

"I'll give you a willywoppus kiss," said Daddy.

"What's 'at?"

"Willywoppusses kiss each other—er—on the back of the neck," said Wilkins;

and Toodlems gleefully accepted another institution.

"Now, dear," began Wilkins, when the baby was tucked away, "this is more serious than I have led you to believe. The doctor said this form of bronchitis was very hard to cure; and that it is very contagious. It may take two months for me to get well. During that time I must not kiss anyone and must not sleep in the room with anyone. My laundry must be kept from yours and Toodlems."

Sweetheart was crying softly, and Wilkins clumsily continued, "Why, only two months, Sweetheart—" a flashing look of scorn checked him—and she resumed her soft crying.

"I mean, of course, that it will be terribly hard for me, too; but I can't have my wife and boy sick with bronchitis. Now give me a willywoppus kiss and go to bed. You look tired!"

Silently she moved to the door, her head averted. Wilkins, with ashen face, sprang to her and crushed her to him, keeping his head turned from her, while her repressed sobs burst forth in a flood of grief.

"Dearest," he choked, "it will be hard for you; but we must be brave." Then playfully he kissed her at the nape of her neck and said, "I have some papers to look over that will take me an hour; so you go to bed like a good little girl."

When she was gone he collapsed in a chair. For an hour he remained motionless, with only an occasional shudder passing over his thin, sloping shoulders. Then he went to the secretary and wrote feverishly for a half hour, a letter to his wife, full of love and business directions.

At Sweetheart's open door he heard her soft, regular sleep-breathing. No burglar was ever so guiltily self-conscious as he was for the next few minutes. He came out of his room dressed in an old suit of clothes, with a bathrobe over his arm. Down the stairs and out the back door he softly hurried, leaving the bathrobe in the kitchen.

At the rear of his yard was a large field, and in this a reservoir which supplied a mill farther down the valley. On the edge of the reservoir Wilkins paused and listened. Secure from interruption, he waded into the icy water until it came up to his neck. Then the very acuteness of the stinging chill numbing his sensations, his boyhood came back to him, and he swam out fifty yards boldly and back to the shore. Like a frightened rabbit he scurried home, stripped off his wet clothes in the cold November night, hid them under the stoop and stepped into the kitchen numb and blue with cold.

"If that won't cause pneumonia I don't know what will!" he chattered, as he got into his bathrobe and went softly to his room.

When Wilkins awoke the next morning, Sweetheart was kneeling by his bed with her arms around him, kissing him awake.

"You did not cough once all night, dearest," she cried, "and when I came in to waken you, you were sleeping like a child! Your cheeks are pink and your eyes bright. I don't think you are sick."

"The fever is rising," thought Wilkins with a kind of triumph. He gently and firmly repeated his objections to kissing. Sweetheart was openly and roguishly defiant.

"I must hurry matters!" muttered Wilkins in alarm, when she had gone.

He dressed, and ate a large breakfast. "It will encourage the fever," ran through his mind as he consumed bacon and eggs, toast, coffee and oatmeal.

Then he bestowed the new kiss on two warm necks, and hurried to work.

Out of sight of the house he removed his overcoat and muffler, and strode

along in the chill morning air. He was not surprised at his feeling of well-being, attributing it to the rising fever. The absence of his cough worried him so much that he casually asked Smithers, "What does it mean when a chap with tuberculosis quits coughing?"

"Means he had better be measured for his shroud," declared the pessimistic Smithers; and Wilkins again felt better at this confirmation of his hopes.

Daily for two weeks, three weeks, a month, Wilkins had taken his icy swim after Sweetheart had gone to bed. Finally he had to break the ice and be content with a wetting. He saw that soon the reservoir would be frozen too solidly for his purposes. And one night, just after he had hidden the old suit under the stoop and gotten into his bath robe, Sweetheart came into the kitchen to get Toodlems a drink of water.

"Why, dearest!" she cried. "How you frightened me! What on earth are you doing?"

"I forgot to lock the door," he said glibly. "Ain't it cold?"

"Awfully! Kiss me just once, won't you dear?"

"Naughty, naughty!" he countered laughing. "Do' to bed or Papa whip naughty dirl!" and he fled.

In his bed, he buried his head in his pillow to keep from screaming out in agony. For thirty days he had nurtured hopes of a speedy death; and only today gloomy old Smithers had told him "how well he looked!" Would pneumonia never come? He had eaten four times as much as usual and his clothes were getting tight. At first he thought it was bloatedness; but it was solid! He was strong. He had not coughed for days! Poor little Sweetheart was looking badly. He suspicioned that she cried much in secret. Toodlems was becoming unruly from his neglect. Something must be done, and yet, the suicide must be adroit! It must be beyond the suspicions of the excuse-seeking insurance companies!

Little Wilkins had levied heavily on his small stock of resourcefulness and found it now bankrupt. His fine plan was failing, and he did not know which way to turn. He decided to consult another doctor to see how much longer he had to live as a menace to his loved ones.

Now, the Fates which played the scurvy joke on Wilkins of sending him to Doctor Mason, were repentant; so in the morning, when he hurried down a side street seeking a doctor's sign, these repentant Fates made the sign of Doctor Boggs loom large before Wilkins eyes. He entered the office.

Doctor Boggs was honest, and therefore very poor.

"Doctor," said Wilkins, "I have tuberculosis, and wish to know how long I have to live, what I must do and *what I must not do!*" (Rather good way of of putting it, thought Wilkins.)

"Strip!" said Doc Boggs, in a voice which could be heard for two blocks, and motioning Wilkins to an old leather couch. Wilkins laid down.

Leisurely the doctor made his examination. "The upper half of the right lung—" began Wilkins volubly. "Shut up!" roared Boggs.

Lungs, heart, sputum, kidneys, blood, eyes were examined. Doctor Boggs was thorough. At the end of an hour he lighted a villainous pipe and, blowing smoke into Wilkins' face said, "Are you trying to string me?"

"Wh-wh-what?" stammered Wilkins.

"I said are you trying to string me—fool me? Don't you know the English language?" roared Boggs.

"I—I—no—I am sincere, Doctor—" and little Wilkins burst into tears. The terrible strain of weeks broke forth, and he wept as unaffectedly as a child.

Doctor Boggs smoked on until Wil-

kins's sobs were under control.

"Now look here, old man!" said Boggs gently, "you tell me the beginning, the end, and the middle of this business." And Wilkins, aghast at himself, told the whole story of his fear of consumption, of the other doctor, of his courting death, and all. While he was talking, Doctor Boggs reached for his handkerchief and bowed his head. Before the story was finished his shoulders were heaving, and he was catching his breath. (And I thought at first that he was unsympathetic! thought Wilkins.)

When the story was finished, Doctor Boggs burst into a roar of laughter that shook the house. He yelled; he slapped his legs; he beat Wilkins on the back; he guffawed and held his sides, while Wilkins looked around fearfully for an avenue of escape from this lunatic! At length he became calm.

"Now listen, you young ass!" he gasped. "Tuberculosis is very curable in its early stages. If you ever had it, which I doubt, you are entirely cured. The cold plunges you took are the quickest cure on earth for cases of your type! Oh, but this is rich! Rich!" and he had another laugh. "And—and he tried to ruin his stomach—and his arms and legs got bloated!" gasped the doctor almost strangling. "And—and his cough stopped—and his deep sleep was a sign of weakness—ha, ha, ha!"

"I am really well then?" tremulously asked Wilkins.

Suddenly serious, Doctor Boggs said, "Yes! You are physically almost perfect in condition! Now, use your cold plunges in more moderation. Take regular, out-of-doors exercise. Eat all you want of whatever you want—and God bless you for the darndest fool I ever met!"

Wilkins laughed gleefully. "I was an awful fool, wasn't I?" he said.

"It is often hard to separate the fool and the hero," said Doctor Boggs huskily. He had been laughing a great deal.

Wilkins paid his bill and walked out into the December air. No convict just freed ever saw the myriad beauties of the out-of-door world as did Wilkins at that moment.

He called a taxi and hurried to the bank two hours late. He made his excuses to the cashier and demanded a day off, which was granted. Then he raced to the little cottage. The meter said two dollars and sixty cents; but he threw the chauffeur a five-dollar bill and yelled, "No change!" and hurried into the house.

Sweetheart came to the door in alarm, and Toodlem's eyes were big at this unheard of happening.

"I'm well! I'm well!" yelled Wilkins, smothering first one and then the other with kisses, real kisses!

"Pay bear, Daddy! Pay bear!" shrieked Toodlems; and such a wild glorious bear was never seen.

Breathless, Wilkins explained. "I'm cured! Doctor said so 'smorning! I have a holiday. We'll play bear and kiss each other until lunch time. Then we'll all go for a ride in a rubber-neck wagon like we did once on our wedding-trip, Sweetheart! Then a funny show and supper at the *Grand Hotel!*"

"O-O-Oh!" cried Sweetheart. "How lovely!" Then she began to cry.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Wilkins.

"I'm s-so h-happy!" sobbed Sweetheart.

"I know just how you feel!" emphatically said Wilkins. "I almost did it myself!"

That evening Doctor Boggs was walking through the park. By the lake he paused and looked down at the cold, forbidding waters, musing. He smiled whimsically and muttered:

"A fool and a hero! They're hard to separate!"

One Was a Coward

BY RUSSELL GORE

A father fails at the test to risk his life to save the life of his child. Tormented with years of remorse Fate flings him a chance to redeem himself.

IND of cold and creepy looking, eh, pardner? Kind of shivery and snaky? Kind of beastly chilly and bad tempered? Would you take a chance at a jump?"

I turned on the stranger standing close beside me on the parapet. He had echoed my thoughts.

"Would I take a chance?" I had asked myself the question as on this clear, starlight night I had leaned over the wought iron railing that separates the platform of the railroad depot in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from a sheer drop into the river, miscalled the Grand, sixty feet below.

Instead of answering, I replied with another question.

"Would you?"

"Gee, no, I'm too much of a coward." He tossed a cigar over the railing. Together we watched the light go out when it struck the water.

"It would be madness," he added. "But that isn't the reason that would hold me back. I'm too much of a coward, I tell you! Even if my own child had fallen over and I knew I could save it from drowning by getting to it in time, I don't believe I could do it. Yet—maybe—oh, I don't know."

We both glanced at the group of children reaching over the edge in their play at the other end of the platform.

"Mother doesn't seem to care if they fall into the drink," the stranger said, nodding toward a woman sitting on a bench under the arc light nearby. Her back was toward us. She was reading.

"Not much danger," I answered, and turned again to my contemplation of the water.

"Seems to get you the way it does me," commented the man, once more leaning over beside me and studying the flickering lanes of silver cast from the lights on the street bridge a few hundred feet away.

"Get me? How?"

I was anxious to end the conversation with this chance acquaintance of unprepossessing appearance. His shabby clothes did not prejudice me but his face did. There was in its lines, as I saw it occasionally when he turned toward me, something shifty and evasive, that I did not like.

"Why, the fascination of figuring out whether anything or anybody in this world would induce you to jump over!"

It was uncanny to realize the intuition behind his guess at my thought.

"I'd try it if I thought there was any chance of saving a life," I answered boldly.

Together we returned to our gaze of the river. It truly was a "bad tempered" river that snarled over the rocks beneath. Only one chance in a hundred could save him who made the leap from instant death.

"I wish I'd tried it!"

The remark caused me, against my

will, to ask the question—"When?"

"When I stood here, just as you and I are standing now, with my wife and kid five years ago. The boy—he was three then—was playing just like that one yonder, and he tumbled over. Wasn't hurt a bit except for the wetting! A boatman fished him out in a jiffy. But my wife—she lives in this town now—never forgave me."

"Never forgave you for what?"

"For not jumping. I took one look over the edge and—well—I just couldn't!"

"And she thought you a coward?"

"Man, what are you talking about? I was a coward; a dirty, low-lived, cringing coward! I've never got over it. It's made me what I am now! See?

He turned his face full to the light. I saw it was flabby from dissipation, with great purple rings under the watery blue eyes. There was just enough "set" to the mouth to tell me how he must have looked once.

"She left you?"

"No," he laughed harshly. "I left her. She had told me very plainly what she thought of me. It was altogether too true. I couldn't face her after that. A train was going out and I hopped on to it. Haven't been back till this trip, and I'm going out again in ten minutes—just as soon as the train leaves for Detroit."

"Were you—I mean do feel you really were a coward?"

Thoughtfully he lighted a fresh cigar. "Yes and no. In the first place, I didn't know it was Jerry. I thought it was one of the bunch he was playing with. Then, too, I figured that no one could go over there and live. I couldn't see any sense in killing myself by making a jump for a dead child."

"Yet you say you looked over and 'just couldn't.' You were afraid?"

"Yes, that's what has hurt. I was afraid. I'd be afraid now, wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps," I answered. "But any honorable man should try at least to save the life of a child, his own or another's. So help me God, I wouldn't be a coward! I'd try!"

The stranger shivered. His voice when he next spoke was a whine, accentuated by contrast with the self-confident ring of my own words.

"I'd try to try, mister," he half whispered, half wailed, "honestly I would! It would mean so much to me if I could—self-respect, her and the lad back, everything; but you mustn't look at me that way, really you musn't! You don't know, don't you see that you don't know? Doesn't the good book say somewhere 'Judge not lest ye be judged?' Doesn't it?"

"Yes, you poor, sneaking, sniveling excuse for a man, it does, but—it was your child!"

"I'd do it, mister, for my own, but I didn't—"

He never ended the sentence, for a shriek from the group of children sounded high over the whistle of the incoming train. The woman on the bench dropped her book and came running toward us, the light full on her face. I had no time to think of the "You! You!" that the stranger gasped at her, but only called, shrieking in my suspense, "Was it a child that fell? A boy?"

"Yes, yes," she cried.

"What boy?" both of us gasped out the question simultaneously.

For the fraction of a second—just an infinitesimal fraction of a second—the woman looked, uneasily, at the group of frightened children, then steadily at her husband.

"Jerry."

I ran to the railing, stripping myself as I went for the leap. At the edge I paused—for a peer into the darkness—

and then, for a nameless something that rose in my throat choked me, throttled, suffocated me! I couldn't—just couldn't!

Dumbly I let myself be pushed aside by the stranger, and dumbly I watched as I saw his body hurtle through the air, descending in a great arc to the deeper water of the outer channel beyond the snowy line that marked the shallows directly below.

I was still dumb when the man, a moment later, with the child in his arms, mounted the iron steps to the bridge and entering the depot by the street door, laid him, crying and wet, at the woman's feet.

"Alice, this time I have saved our Jerry!" was all he said.

Dumbly I looked on when she folded the man to her arms, and dumbly I noted the exaltation that had transformed his face.

"To think that twice—"

"Forgive me Joe," she was sobbing now. "I couldn't help it. I had to know."

"Know what?" he demanded, as the water dripped from him and formed a pool in the center of the crowd that had collected.

"That you weren't—you know. Oh, you know! Here is Jerry—your son that you haven't seen for five years, Joe," and she overwhelmed with kisses a round-eyed lad of the group that had been playing by the parapet.

"Then whose child is this?" he asked, lifting the wet bundle at her feet.

"It is—" my numbness broke under the sheer craze to be gone to the waiting train—"my child."

In Place of the Benediction

BY LLEWELLYN J. WILLIAMS

A roving minster strikes a western town and "holds meeting." He converts all the miners excepting one and he wasn't there to be converted as quick following events proved.

THE horseman rode up and dismounted in order to read the printed notices which were nailed to the tree. He was obviously weary; the heaviness of his eyelids, the slowness of his movements, and the awkwardness of his walk, suggested longs hours in the saddle.

He was soon absorbed in the detailed description of one Red Wilkins, who was wanted in a distant county for complicity in a robbery. In large black letters at the top of the sheet, were printed the words, "Five hundred dollars reward."

Among the other uncomplimentary statements was that which classified the outlaw as a very dangerous character who would shoot to kill on the slightest provocation. At the bottom of the sheet was the name of Tom Walker, Sheriff of Custer County.

The man laughed as he finished reading, and tore up the bill, scattering the fragments to the four winds.

"Ain't no use in Tom spreading it on like that. He's a great fellow for composing. That kind of a paper will make red heads unpopular all over the country. One would think that it is a terrible crime to have a red top. Take me now, for instance. They might suspect me."

As he took off his hat and shook his head in the breeze, there was disclosed a fiery red mop. So intent had he been in his perusal of the bill, that he had not been conscious of the approach of the peculiar looking individual who had ridden up. The newcomer looked out of place in that spot—an aged graybeard, in the natural haunt of the clean shaven and virile young cowpuncher.

He nodded at the first man, and looked at him curiously through large steel-framed spectacles. Then in a moment, he turned to read the words of the remaining bill. The younger man glanced at this paper, and saw that it was a notice of a protracted meeting which was to be held in the nearby town. He mounted his pony, and was about to ride off, when the old man turned and addressed him.

"Are you a stranger here, my friend?"

"Yes," replied the other.

"I'm Baker the preacher," said the old man. "I see they got the notices printed all right. I've been riding around to see if they had put them up where people can see them."

The young man grinned: "Going to stir them up a bit are you, Parson?"

"I hope so. I'd be glad to have you come Mr.—"

"Jones—Bill Jones," returned the other.

"I hope you'll come, brother."

"All right! I may come round if there's nothing else doing in town. So long till I see you again!"

Then with a dig of the spur, he was off in a lope, leaving the old man standing there. As he looked back once, he saw that the old man was watching him as he rode towards town. When Bill

approached the settlement, he drew up into a walk, and rode nonchalantly down the main street to the livery stable. Then, after putting up his horse, he sought the hotel and went to bed. He flung himself down on the covers without waiting to undress.

It was dusk when he awoke—a few minutes before the ringing of the supper bell. After washing the grime from his face and hands, he brushed the dust from his clothing, and went downstairs. He was relieved to find but a few people in the dining room as he went in, and selected a seat in an inconspicuous corner. After a hasty meal, he went out into the dimly lighted street and strolled about aimlessly, stopping now and then to peer into the lighted interior of a saloon or store.

By and by the sound of voices raised in an old-fashioned hymn reached his ears. Then he remembered the old preacher and his invitation. He turned and walked in the direction from which the singing came.

In an open space at the end of the street, he found an arbor, where perhaps two hundred people were gathered for worship. Jones saw the old man up at the front leading the song with vigorous sweeps of his arms.

Jones lingered among the loiterers outside for awhile, and listened to the subdued conversation. These men were there for no apparent reason. They had probably been attracted to the light like so many candle flies.

"He makes enough noise to be a mighty powerful preacher," said one.

"He sure does," agreed another.

"Where'd he come from?" asked a third.

"I dunno," replied the first man. "He come in yesterday on an old mule, and said he was a preacher. He had bills printed for the meeting right away, and scattered them around. He was tickled to death when he found that the old Baptist arbor was still standing."

"What is he—Baptist, Methodist or what?"

"I dunno. He never said. Said he'd stay here two weeks if the meeting was a success."

An interval of silence followed when the man had spoken, for the preacher had raised his voice in prayer. His tones were strong and powerful, and they reached far out into the darkness outside the arbor. When he had finished, Jones and one or two others went in. The rear seats were all filled up; and they had to go well up toward the front before they found places. The preacher saw Bill, and recognized him with a smile.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Jones," he said.

Bill nodded and sank awkwardly into his seat, conscious that the old man's eyes were upon him. It chanced that his seat was directly under one of the lanterns; and he knew that his fiery hair was being shown off to perfection. Bill tried to assume an indifferent air as he waited for the preacher to begin his sermon. When the old man was well started and on his way, Bill found little in his remarks to interest him. It was the usual rehash of old platitudes, denunciations, and warnings, rendered with wild gestures and loud voice. Bill didn't believe the old man was sincere, for he seemed to be speaking solely for effect. He hoped that he would soon come to an end so that he could get away.

Toward the end of the discourse, however, his attention was captured by the preacher. A look of surprise came to his face. The preacher noticed it, and thought that Bill had at last fallen under the spell of his eloquence. From then on, the old man preached as if there was no one else before him. The con-

gregation noticed this partiality, and wondered.

One man noticed Bill's red head for the first time, and began putting two and two together. He nudged his neighbor, and leaned over to whisper. The other looked earnestly at Bill and nodded. At this moment the old preacher saw them, and he reprimanded them sharply for their lack of reverence. They were sitting across the aisle from Bill, who had noticed the by-play out of the tail of his eye. After the rebuke, they kept silence, but they kept their eyes turned toward him.

When the call for penitents came, one by one, different members of the congregation went forward and grasped the hand of the preacher. Bill Jones sat there unmoved amidst the excitement; and the preacher began to turn all the powers of persuasion on this stubborn individual.

Bill seemingly paid no attention to his pleadings at first; and the victim felt instinctively that the members of the audience were eyeing him in disapproval. Suddenly, as the old man talked, Bill began to squirm uneasily in his seat. He seemed to be in distress. The crowd looked on in evident enjoyment, for they felt that the old man was winning. He would have to come through under that kind of pressure.

Eyes were closed here and there all over the house, for the earnest ones were trying to help the preacher with their prayers. Finally, to the relief of everybody, Bill arose from his seat and went forward. The preacher gave voice to a loud expression of joy, and knelt down beside the penitent as he began to labor with him.

As he asked question after question, Bill nodded his head silently. The congregation was very well satisfied now. The old man lifted up his hand; and the assembly bowed their heads as a great hush came over them. Then with eyes closed, and uplifted head, the old man began to pray for Bill.

As the prayer closed, the sound of a metallic click was distinctly heard. An oath of chagrin and surprise followed. Everybody was on the alert in an instant.

The sight that met their eyes was astounding. Several men vaulted over the benches to go to the aid of the preacher, but stopped suddenly at the sight of the six-shooter in Bill's hand. He stood beside the preacher, whose wrists were encased in strong handcuffs.

"Friends, I'm sorry to break in on your little meeting this way," said Bill. "I had to get him when I could, for he's a dangerous customer. If it hadn't been for a streak of luck, he'd have finished without any disturbance. When he got excited in preaching awhile back, he carelessly pushed back his hair. When I saw the streak of red, I knew him. You people had the reward right in your hands if you had only known it."

With a quick movement of his hand, he tore away the beard and wig from the preacher's head, and disclosed a scowling face crowned by a mop of bright red hear.

"I'm Bill Jones, deputy sheriff of Custer county," said the captor. "This is Red Wilkins whom I have been trailing for some time. And now the parson can say the benediction if he wants to."

But with an oath, Wilkins pleaded that they start on their way; for he was fearful of the storm that would break when they realized how he had worked them.

Luke McLuke Says

BY J. SYME HASTINGS

You can't make a married man believe that figures don't lie.

The secret of success is to hire a good press agent and then live up to your press notices.

It is none of my business, but some of our best lady reformers seem to have the idea that it is indecent to expose the female form in a public place only when admission is charged.

There ain't no such animals as a husband who won't look at another woman and a parrot that won't swear.

It would help some if girls were as anxious to stay married as they are to get married.

You never have to sic the collectors on to a man who owes you a grudge.

There are a whole lot of people who would never do any reading if some books were not barred from the public libraries.

Mother gets all the credit for having patience. But did you ever see Father hold a pole for six hours without getting a bite?

Save a man's life and he won't be able to recall your name a year later. Borrow ten dollars from him and he will never forget you.

The kind of a man who lets a rabbit foot do all his hustling for him is always wondering why he is unlucky.

You can always make a married man feel good by telling him that he doesn't look it.

A pessimist is a man who orders an asbestos-lined coffin when he gets sick.

It is a mighty good thing for Nature that we do not get any fun out of dying. If we did, the reformers would organize a Society for the Prevention of it.

If a girl is so flat-chested that she can wear a gown that puts her waist line across her shoulder blades, she wants you to believe that all women are shaped that way.

Bracers won't brace you and eye-openers will only close them.

Most married women spend all their money before they get it, and then don't get it.

Every wife has an awful time trying to convince her husband that sofa pillows must not be used as pillows.

The old-fashioned woman who used to say her prayers night and morning now has a daughter who knocks on wood.

You never realize how much a friend thinks of you until he prefaces a touch for some coin.

There is no sense in arguing with a woman. If you are wrong, you lose. If you are right she will start to bawl, and you will lose anyway.

It would help some if nature was more liberal with foreheads and chins and not so wasteful of noses and ears.

The corset we will have with us always. Thin women won't go without them and fat women can't go without them. So why knock?

When a woman builds air castles she sees to it that there is a big wide closet in every room.

A boy's idea of Eternity is the space between dinner and supper.

The 1914 spring style in skirts is just as affectionate as the 1913 kind.

Pay down and you will always be paid up.

His Works Do Follow Him

BY CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

Cowed by the force of a greater personality a ne'er-do-well locks in his heart the murder secret of the town's big man. Freed by death he tells his story to unbelieving ears.

GENERAL Henry Ransome was dying. The news spread like wildfire through the town, leaving sorrow in its wake. The town loved General Ransome. Moreover it was proud of him. For more than seventy years, man and boy, he had dwelt in it; for fifty years he had been its most prominent citizen; for nearly twenty years he had been its boast. The town was proud of him because of his record in the great civil war, in which he had risen from private to brigadier general, and it was also proud because, as mayor, he had forced it to build for the future and to lay its foundations broad and deep. It grew to love him in later years when he had retired from public life and had mellowed through the years that saw the fruition of his plans.

The news of his illness drew attention to his early life and also drew attention to Zeke Anderson, whose life had been bound up with his for half a century, but of whom the town was distinctly not proud. Henry Ransome, Zeke Anderson, and Harvey Wiley, said gossip, were boys together and were just of age when the great war broke out. All of them wanted to marry Ruth Moore, and none of them were willing to enlist so long as the others failed to do so. When at last, Zeke Anderson was chosen by the conscription the field seemed narrowed down to Ransome and Wiley. However, at the last moment, Anderson paid Ransome a thousand dollars to go as his substitute, and Ransome marched away. Zeke, however did not profit, for a week later Ruth married Harvey Wiley.

Nearly a year later Wiley was robbed and murdered—"by persons unknown," said the coroner's jury. When, two years later, the war ended and Ransome came home wearing a general's stars, he found his old sweetheart a widow and promptly married her.

When Zeke learned of the marriage he seemed to lose all control of himself. He was already green with envy at the ovation that Ransome had received on his return, and this last blow drove him wild. Up and down the streets he raged, declaring that by going to the war as his substitute Ransome had first robbed him of the fame he would have won, and had then used the stolen glory to rob him of his chosen bride. "But I'll get even with him," he shouted. "I'll get even with him."

When he heard of Zeke's outburst, General Ransome laughed. "Zeke's a good fellow," he declared. "I must do something for him."

He did do something for him—not once but many times. Place after place he obtained or made for him, only to see him lose them one by one. For years it was understood that he practically pensioned him. "I've just got to do it," he laughed. "Zeke's got an idea that he bought me for life when he paid me that

thousand dollars, and I've got to acknowledge the obligation."

When the town began its pilgrimage to General Ransome's door Zeke was with it. He did not ring the bell nor inquire. He merely perched on the horseblock, with his shoulders hunched forward, and his claw-like hands clinched on the edge of the stone, looking for all the world like an ill-omened bird of prey. When anyone he knew came out of the house he shambled forward to ask what they had learned. One day he tackled Doctor Franklin.

The doctor looked at him curiously. "He may get over it," said the doctor; "and if he does he'll be good for a great many years yet. He'll outlive you if you don't take better care of yourself, Zeke."

The old man tried to straighten up. "He won't," he snarled. "He won't. He's three years older than I am."

"That may be true," the doctor looked amused, "but even if he is three years older than you he's taken better care of himself and—"

"Better care. And how did he come to do it. How did he come to do it, I ask you!" The old man's voice rose to a shriek. "He's had money and place and a wife to look after hm. That's what he's had. And how did he get it? He stole it—stole it, I tell you. He took my thousand dollars to go to the war, and then he got promoted and honored and made mayor, and he married Ruth and got rich and all. And by right it all ought to have been mine."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. He had heard all this before and he recognized the futility of demurring. However, he had something to say, and he started to say it.

But Zeke interrupted. "Maybe you think I'm a fool," he quavered. "But I ain't. Who was Henry Ransome when he was a boy? He wasn't nobody. His people was as poor as dirt. I stood way above him at school. I could lick him easy then and I done it more than once. And he got promoted for bravery! for bravery! Bah! I was a heap braver than he ever was. And a heap smarter. I'd ha' got to be a major-general if I'd gone to the war instead of letting him go. And he went and robbed me of everything."

"Oh! Well!" The doctor broke in; he was tired of listening to Zeke. "He's been mighty good to you all these years—a lot better than anyone else has been and now—"

"And why shouldn't he be good to me? Bah! it makes me sick to hear people say how grateful I ought to be. Henry Ransome ain't ever done anything for me but what he had to do. You needn't think he gave me any money or anything willing. He done it because he had to."

"Oh, nonsense!" The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "You've been drinking, Zeke. Better go home and sober up."

"I ain't been drinking. I've got it on Henry Ransome and he knows it."

"Got what on him?" demanded the doctor scornfully.

The old man's face wrinkled into cunning lines. "Never you mind," he wheezed. "Maybe he'll get well yet and—"

"I hope he will. He's stronger today. And he wants to see you."

Zeke seemed to shrink into his clothes. "Wants to see me?" he almost screamed. "Wants to see me? He wants to kill me."

"Nonsense! Come on in."

Zeke went in hesitantly. He recovered himself only when he saw the evident helplessness of the worn-out form on the bed.

Far gone as he was General Ransome summoned up a smile. "Sit down, Zeke!" he said. "Please go, Doctor. I want to talk to Zeke alone."

The doctor went out, heedless of Zeke's recurrent terror, and the dying man turned to his unwilling visitor. "Well, Zeke!" he rasped, "you'll be able to tell soon now. Mighty soon!"

Zeke's faded eyes flashed for a moment, then dulled. "I ain't going to tell anything," he muttered.

"Oh! yes, you are! I know you, Zeke! You'll tell—if you're alive to do it. And it might worry Ruth. I was just wondering whether I hadn't better make sure you're not alive. Stop! Don't move! I've got a pistol in my hand pointing at your heart and I could drop you before you got out of your chair. You know I could."

The old man writhed. "I won't tell! I'll swear I won't," he babbled.

"Oh, yes, you will! You've been waiting for years for the chance, you cowardly cur. I'd have defied you from the start if it hadn't been for Ruth. It'll hurt her to know. But she'll forgive me. And I think the town will. Seventy years of life here count for something! Yes! I'll risk it. Go ahead and tell. I'm not going to shoot you. Go ahead and tell. But don't be in a hurry. I might get well yet, you know. Now call the doctor and get out."

That night General Ransome died. Zeke found it out the next morning, when he came to the horseblock and saw the black streamers on the door. He waited till the doctor came out.

"Is he really dead good and sure, Doctor?" he asked, eagerly.

The doctor nodded. "Yes, he's dead," he said, briefly.

"Damn him!" snarled the old man. "Damn him! Now I can tell."

The doctor glared at him. "Tell what, you sneaking hound?" he said.

"Tell what he done fifty years ago! I ain't never dared tell before. Henry Ransome said he'd cut my throat if I did, and he'd have kept his word."

"Bosh!" The doctor swept the old man aside. "I haven't got time to listen—"

"Yes! You *have* got time. You've got to *take* time. Henry Ransome murdered Harvey Wiley fifty years ago, and I can prove it. He just murdered him plumb so."

The doctor stared. He had known that Zeke was failing, but he had never before realized how rapidly. "You're getting foolish, Zeke, he said. "You'd better go home and forget such nonsense."

"You don't believe me, huh?" grunted the old man. "Well, I've got the proof. Henry Ransome wanted to marry Ruth and Harvey got her. That's why Henry was willing to go to the war as my substitute. That's how he got to be a general and all. It's all mine—all the place and position and honor and everything. He stole them from me, I tell you."

The doctor nodded. "Yes; Yes!" he agreed, soothingly. "Now you go home and tell me about this tomorrow.'

"I tell you it's true," burst out the old man. "Harvey got Ruth by a trick. He lied to her and to Henry. I found out about it and I wrote Henry, and he came back from the war unbeknownst to anybody. He met Harvey Wiley right out where the poorhouse is now. He cussed him and called him a liar and a cur, and Harvey cussed back, and he hit Harvey with a club and killed him. Harvey shot as he was falling and got Henry in the arm. Then Henry saw that Harvey was dead, and got scared and ran away, and went back to the war."

"I suppose he told you all about it when he came home at last," suggested the doctor, scornfully.

"No, he didn't need to tell me anything. I saw the whole thing. When Henry went away I went up to Harvey.

He was dead, but before he had died he'd dipped his finger in blood and written 'Henry Ransome killed me,' on an old newspaper and signed his name to it. I took the paper and I didn't say anything. I was glad Henry had killed him. I'd hoped he'd do it. That's what I sent for him for. I waited a year or so, and then, just as I was going to ask Ruth to marry me, Henry Ransome came home a general and he sneaked away and married her. He sneaked away, I tell you. I'd have stopped him if I'd known in time.

"When he got back from his wedding trip I told him what I knew. He got white and red, and cold, and still, and devilish, and I told him quick I wouldn't interfere with Ruth, but that he'd got to be a big man, and that it was all due to me, and that he'd got to divide up even. He promised that he would. But he didn't. He didn't divide even. He just gave me something now and then when he saw I'd got to the telling point. He cheated me out of my half; and he swore he'd kill me if I told, and I reckon he would have, too. Now he's dead and he can't kill me, and I can tell. People have got to own up that Henry Ransome ain't what he's been pretending to be. They've got to own that I made him, and they've got to give me proper credit."

The doctor had listened impatiently. When Zeke finished he nodded. "Yes, yes," he said mildly. "It's too bad you shouldn't have gotten all you wanted out of life, but now you'd better go home and rest."

The old man's face grew distorted. "You don't believe me," he shrieked. "You think I'm crazy. Well, I ain't crazy. I've got proof of all I say, and I'll show it too. I'm going to have my rights."

The doctor considered for a moment. Dimly he remembered that Mrs. Ransome's first husband had been murdered. Evidently Zeke had been brooding over this, and had evolved this ridiculous story. Evidently he was no longer fit to look out for himself. The doctor determined to take steps to have him cared for. At the moment, however, he was greatly hurried. "Well, Zeke," he said, "bring your proofs to my office tonight and I'll look over them. I've got to go now." Without waiting for an answer, he jumped into his runabout and hurried away.

Zeke fumbled in his pocket and drew out a worn and tattered newspaper. "Here's the proof now," he shouted. "Other folks'll look at it if you won't. I'll go show it to Jim Kennedy. He'll look at it, all right." Turning away, he shambled down town.

Kennedy, the county attorney, was a busy man. Also he knew Zeke. He listened to the old man's mumblings for a moment, then he called his assistant.

"Oh, Charley!" he said. "Zeke's got a murder to report. Listen to his story, will you." Over the man's back he winked broadly.

Charley listened abstractedly for a while. Then he jumped up. "All right, Zeke," he said. "Leave your proofs with me; I'll attend to them."

"But—but—" Zeke stuttered—"but it's murder."

"Yes, of course it is. General Ransome was evidently a real bad man. Leave your proofs and I'll look into them. Sorry you can't stay longer." The assistant dropped the paper, folded just as Zeke had given it to him, on his desk, and crossed the room to speak to a girl who had just come in.

Zeke shook with rage as he stared after him. Then he picked up the paper and shambled off, shaking his head and muttering.

Ten minutes later, after the girl had gone, Kennedy called his assistant.

"What bee did the old man have buzzing in his bonnet, Charley?" he asked.

The assistant shook his head. "Search me," he said. "Something about General Ransome murdering somebody. Say, that old man's crazy as they make 'em. He ought to be locked up."

Kennedy considered. "I'll call up Doctor Agnew and speak to him about it. The old man hasn't got anybody to look after him and it would be a kindness to put him away somewhere."

Meanwhile Zeke had crossed the street to a tall brick building bearing the sign "Evening Press." With many grunts and groans he climbed the long flight of stairs that led to the editorial rooms. He knew the place well and made his way past the empty tables soon to be occupied by the reporters and sat down beside the desk of the city editor. As he waited he muttered to himself, sometimes raging at the county attorney, and sometimes chuckling and rubbing his gnarled hands.

At last the city editor came in. He glanced keenly at Zeke, noting his disordered manner. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "Hello, Zeke," he said. "Glad you came in. I was just about to send somebody after you to get a story about General Ransome's life. He's dead, you know. You and he were great chums when you were boys, weren't you?"

Zeke chuckled. "Yes, I reckon we were great chums," he said. "I know things about Henry Ransome that nobody else knows."

"All right!" The city editor beckoned to a reporter who had just come in. "Here, Joe!" he called. "You take Mr. Anderson to your desk and get a story from him about General Ransome. Make three or four sticks of it."

With brightening face, Zeke followed the young reporter to the other side of the room. Scarcely waiting to be seated he began his tale, pouring it out with a mumbling rush.

The reporter listened while Zeke talked. Occasionally he jotted down a name or a date. Soon, however, he ceased to make notes and listened silently. At last he laid down the wad of copy paper on which he had been writing and got up.

"That'll make a bully story, Mr. Anderson," he declared. "I'll fix it up fine."

Zeke stared at the boy amazedly. "Ain't you going to look at the proofs?" he quavered.

"Oh, yes! The proofs. Let's see them."

Zeke pulled out the tattered newspaper. The reporter opened it and glanced at the markings scrawled across it. Then he slipped it under his typewriter. "All right, Mr. Anderson," he said. "We'll attend to it. Come in whenever you have anything good for us. Good morning."

Zeke hesitated. Then his face wrinkled venomously. "All right," he said. "I reckon you mean it. But to make sure I'll go tell Ruth Ransome about it."

The reporter watched him as he shambled out. Then he walked over to the city editor's desk. "The old man's dotty," he announced. "Won't talk about anything except somebody he says General Ransome murdered fifty years ago."

"Ransome!" The city editor laughed. "What were the proofs he was talking about?" he asked.

"The proofs? Nothing to them. Just a dirty old newspaper that's had ripe tomatoes wrapped in it. But say, he said something about going to see Mrs. Ransome, and he mustn't be allowed to. It would bother her a lot. You know how women worry over trifles. The old man's not fit to be at large. Can't we

have him sent to the asylum or somewhere to be taken care of?"

The city editor picked up the telephone. "I'll see," he said.

The next day the *Evening Press* contained on its first page a five-column eulogy of General Ransome, extolling his distinguished life, his patriotic services, and his splendid character. On its fourth page, down in one corner, it carried a five-line paragraph stating that Zeke Anderson, who had been failing mentally for a long time, had been so overwhelmed by the death of General Ransome, his life-long friend, that his mind had given way altogether and his friends had been compelled to secure his commitment to the insane asylum. "He was arrested," ended the paragraph, "at Mrs. Ransome's door, where he was apparently trying to express his grief as well as his bewildered wits would permit. Much sympathy is felt for him."

His Story

BY EUGENE SHADE BISBEE

A young reporter is sent out to cover a murder. He brings back a big story but it wasn't the story he expected to get.

ELL, what'd you get?" The query of the Night City Editor was staccato-like as it snapped at Briggs, who stood by the desk in the inside office to report the result of his assignment.

"Make a column? We're long on bull-dog; short on news; room for a column if you've got the stuff. Get any pictures? Give you a spread layout if you have."

Briggs, ordinarily optimistic and self-confident, as became his soubriquet of "Breezy," for once was subdued. He had hardly started on his career as a reporter and he had, in his own mind, fallen down on the most promising assignment yet entrusted to him. Send a man out on a story that looks fertile, and let that man fail to land the goods and he becomes, to the very busy and comprehensive editorial mind trained to news-scenting and delivering, a mere atom of inefficiency, to be eliminated as soon as possible. Such an atom did Briggs now feel himself to be. He had failed, and he did not exactly know how to confess it.

The assignment had looked, to the City Editor and to Briggs, especially good, the case being the very sensational murderous attack on a young girl by some one as yet unknown to the authorities. To Briggs, when he had come on duty that afternoon, had been handed a brief dispatch, typewritten on flimsy. He took it eagerly and read:

MILL VALE, N. J. JUNE, 20.

Belle Dalton, sixteen, orphan, murderously assaulted in bed by unknown person. Blows on head and sulphuric acid dashed in face as she slept. Lives with sister and brother-in-law. No clues, but jealous mill hand suspected.

"Get out on this quick," the editor had told him. "Go as far as you may have to on expenses. Land the man and there's a bonus for you. Early copy."

"Breezy" had reached the small Jersey town, made a thorough investigation and returned to the city with virtually not a line of real news to add to the laconic dispatch that had sent him forth. To put it mildly, he was chagrined, crest-fallen, disgusted with himself, and quite equal to calling off the whole game and getting out of a profession to which he began to realize he was wholly unsuited. He was really ashamed. Hawley, the chief, saw this in a glance and, having a dull hour before him, felt inclined to help the boy.

"Sit down there, Briggs," he said, "and tell me what you did. Maybe between us we can dig out a yarn. Often happens that a man who's been on a story and gets tired out overlooks points that a fresh head sees clearly. Excuse me a moment."

He stepped to the door of an inner office and spoke a word in an undertone to his stenographer, then returned, dropped into his swivel chair, lighted a cigar, gave one to Briggs and, with his feet in a pile of papers on his desk, signified

that he was prepared to listen.

"Now, go to it," he said; "you've got an hour or more, so tell me every detail from the time you left here until you got back."

"Well, sir," began Briggs, now somewhat at ease; "in the first place, the girl wasn't killed and—"

"I know that, but she'll die;" interrupted Hawley. "The assault was committed, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir;" replied Briggs; "she was assaulted, all right, and pretty badly used up. She came to after they'd left her alone for dead, and had sent for the undertaker. Real fear for her life then actuated her, and she sneaked out of the house and ran away. I found her. She was such a pitiful little object, all bandaged and bleeding, that I took her in tow and brought her away with me. I've got her around the corner at St. Joseph's Hospital now. I hope you'll not think me wrong in doing that, Mr. Hawley."

"Nothing wrong with being a man, Briggs. Go on," said Hawley, smiling at the boy who had not seen the real big feature of his story—the rescue of the girl.

"Well, I found the house all right. It's a plain workingman's cottage on the outskirts of the town, about half a mile from the depot, and occupied by Jasper Judson and his wife and her sister, Belle Dalton. They kept a big yellow cur dog, very sassy and very hungry. I had to club him off while Mrs. Judson stood on the back porch and didn't discourage him from trying to dine on me. When she learned who I was she snapped at me.

"'I thought you was one o' them reporters;' she said. 'Well, you can't git no infermation yere. We ain't goin' to hev no pictures in the papers, neither, an' all you reporters can't do no good spyin' 'round 'bout what don't concern you. You better hike afore my ole man comes home frum the mill. He's pretty sot agin reporters. They's been a passel of 'em 'round yere all day, an' he's sore agin 'em.'

"It was pretty discouraging, and I lost my temper for a moment, when that cur took a good nip at my leg, so I broke my club over his head, sending him yelping away, and then told her that I had come to inspect the house and that I was going to do that same, that if she refused me admittance it would indicate that she or her husband had had a hand in the assault, and that I'd cause her arrest as soon as I could get back to the Town Hall. This attitude subdued her somewhat, and she told me to come in and look around, and be quick about it, as she didn't yearn for her husband to know that she had let a reporter enter the house.

"I made the best of the short time I had. It was nearly five o'clock, and the mill would soon shut down and the husband be home. First, I inspected the house from the outside, and found that a wire screen had been broken from a cellar window. I crawled through and faced a flimsy pine door that opened onto a stairway, which had been pried from its hinges. This rather puzzled me, for there had been no lock on the door, which merely closed rather snugly. I made a special note of that, partly because Mrs. Judson, from the head of the stairs, gave me her theory of this as the way the murderous burglars had entered the house. The stairs leading to the bedrooms on the second floor rose directly above those from the cellar and opened on a hallway with two doors, one leading into the rear room, occupied by Judson and his wife, the other to the front, and only other room, which was used by Belle Dalton, and in which she lay unconscious at that very moment. This last-named door was locked and nailed up from the inside, Mrs. Judson

explaining that Belle had done it herself, as she was timid.

"The rear bedroom windows overlooked the roof of the kitchen porch. So far the theories all ran that the burglars, as they had been adjudged by the simple people out there, had entered the house through the cellar window and the two flights of stairs, and had had to pass through the Judsons' room, where man and wife were sleeping, in order to get at Belle in the front room. Nothing was stolen from the house, and Judson and his wife were only wakened when Belle screamed as the biting acid struck her face and ate into the tender flesh. Both say they heard the rush of two persons through their room, and saw them spring out the window and leap from the porch roof to the ground.

"I couldn't find any deep footprints in the earth at that point, although a recent rain had softened the bare ground all about the place. But there was a pair of Judson's shoes, mud-covered, in the kitchen, and I measured them with a sheet of copy paper when the old girl wasn't looking, then compared the length and breadth measurement with the footprints at the cellar window. They matched. I had been thinking they might, for a gossipy telegraph operator at the railway station had hinted strongly about Judson being jealous of the attentions of the mill hands to his pretty sister-in-law, and of her being locked in her room one night when she had made a date with a young chap from the mill to go to a country dance and frolic. So, after I got through with the house I walked back along the tracks toward the station and met a crowd of the hands coming from work.

"A man pointed out Judson to me, and I joined him and walked along with him toward his home. He was surly and resentful of my baiting. You see, I put it up to him pretty strong, and mentioned the incident of Belle being locked in her room by him. He'd have killed me for that if he had dared—and could. Then I left him with that thought to chew on, and turned back. There wasn't a train east for two hours, so I walked up to the river bank above the power dams and sat down under a tree, looking across the pretty valley at the fine sunset cloud effect.

"Up to this point I had a pretty good story, for it looked to me as if Judson were the man we were after. My theory was pretty well worked out and I figured on an arrest as soon as those slow-going yokels got our paper in the morning with the insinuating part of the story that touched Judson hard. I must have sat there an hour, thinking it all over, before I realized that I was quite alone in that part of the world. The mill workers had all gone home long ago, and the sun was just settling behind the hills across the valley. I kept thinking of that poor little girl in the Judson house, and wondering how any man could be so bestially cruel and brutal as to do such a deed. I'd settled it in my mind that Judson was the guilty man. He can get ten years but I don't believe the little girl will ever have the nerve to go back and prosecute him. She's frightened out of her life. I never saw such abject terror as she displayed up to the very moment when I gave her to Doctor Robertson, who's an old chum of mine, to take care of.

"But that's ahead of the story. Let's see, the sun was setting—oh, yes; well, it was fearfully quiet. To me, right from the city, it seemed preternaturally quiet and rather got on my nerves after a time, and I began to wish a freight train would come along just to make a noise. A church bell began to ring, and I looked at my watch. It was seven o'clock and a train left for the city at seven-thirty-

five, so I got up and turned toward the depot.

"Right in front of me was a young girl, and I guess I must have started, for she certainly did give me a shock. Her black hair was hanging down her back, tangled and matted, and her face, all but her eyes, was swathed in a white bandage. She had on a long reversible coat, and I could see through the opening at the bottom, where it hadn't been buttoned, that it covered a night dress. She was very pretty and terribly agitated. She spoke before I could say a word.

"'You're a good man;' she said, her voice sweet but giving the impression of coming over a telephone wire with a weak current, very faint.

"'Thank you;' I said; 'how can I be of service to you?'

"'You must take me away with you;' she answered; 'he tried to kill me. I'm Belle Dalton, and I want to tell you all about it for your newspaper. He can't get me now. I'm not afraid of him any more. I nailed my door up because I was afraid of him;—Jaspar, my sister's husband, I mean. He's a wicked man.'

"'You've been badly hurt;' I replied. 'They expected you'd die. You ought not to be out here.'

"'I ran away when my sister wasn't watching;' she said, her eyes smiling above the bandages on her face. 'My sister is afraid of Jasper, too, and he told her to watch me. I'm afraid he'll kill her when he finds me gone. He's drinking again. He brought a bottle home with him. I saw it in his hand when he came in to look at me. Then they went out and I got up, and ran away to you.'

"'How did you know where to find me, and why did you want me?' I asked her.

"'Oh, I knew where you were;' she answered, with a rippling laugh, although she must have been in pain; 'and I wanted you because you were the only one who wasn't afraid to charge Jasper with hurting me.'

"I wondered how she knew I had charged him with it, but in the same moment reasoned that he had probably mentioned it to his wife while they were in the girl's room, thinking her unconscious.

"'Tell me about it;' I said; 'how he hurt you and why.'

"'But we must hurry and catch the train;' she replied. 'I'll tell you on the way to the city.'

"Not another word could I get out of her. She put her hand on my arm and almost dragged me along the road to the station, and we just caught the train. I didn't have time to buy her a ticket, and when the conductor came along I handed him my return coupon, and was so intently listening to her story that I completely forgot to pay for her. I recalled that afterward, for when we left the train the conductor glared at me and whispered something to a guard and I heard the words: 'Nutty, or full o' booze; talking to himself all the way from Mill Vale.'

"She told me that she had been in love with a young chap at the mill, and that her brother-in-law had forbidden her to go with him. He had caught them together lately, and last night came home in an ugly temper, sullen and quiet. She had gone to bed early but couldn't sleep because of fear of him. She said it was past midnight when she heard a noise at her door and sat up in bed. Her eyes were accustomed to the darkness and she recognized Jasper. At the instant of this recognition the fiery liquid struck her face. She screamed, and then felt the fearful blow of a cudgel on her head, and sank to unconsciousness. She knew nothing more until she heard her sister and brother-in-law talking in her room. That was this evening, and she'd been unconscious all that time

—about eighteen hours. Her story made the case clear, but she'll not go back to prosecute. She's afraid."

The 'phone bell on Harvey's desk purred its muted call and the editor caught up the receiver. At the same instant the big clock in the city room struck eleven.

"Night City Editor speaking;" said Hawley over the wire. "Who? Oh, Doctor Robertson, of St. Joseph's Hospital? Yes, Briggs is with me now. Have you notified the police? Well, that's all you can do, I suppose. Yes, rough on our story, though. Too bad she got away. I'll publish a big reward for her apprehension. Thank you. Good-by."

Briggs had sprung from his chair and stood trembling with excitement. Hawley anticipated his question.

"The girl has disappeared," he said. "Doctor Robertson says they have searched the hospital from top to bottom, and can't find her. She left her coat, so she must be wandering about in a night dress and will be picked up by a cop before she's gone a block."

The outer door swung inward and Hawley looked up quickly, then smiled.

"Did you wish to see me?" he asked, and Briggs turned his head, his breeding, for the moment, forgotten.

Then the young reporter's eyes almost leaped out, for in the doorway stood Belle Dalton, just as he had left her, her coat on, her head bandaged, her raven hair matted and tumbling over her shoulders. He stepped toward her, but she smiled and, without speaking, quickly drew the door shut. Both men jumped to it and Briggs, there first, tore it open. He and Hawley looked out on the big city room, filled with reporters and noisy with the rattle of typewriters and telegraph instruments, but not a sign of the girl rewarded them. She had again vanished. Briggs looked rather disgusted but Hawley turned quickly toward him and asked: "Who was that?"

"Belle Dalton, the girl I brought from Mill Vale;" answered Briggs, his voice subdued with excitement.

"I thought so;" replied Hawley.

Catching up the telephone, he got Mill Vale on the wire, then called the chief of police, and for a moment spoke with that official. He hung up the receiver and glanced at Briggs, who was still standing, a queer look of perplexity on his face.

"Sit down, Briggs!" he said.

The reporter sank into his chair. Hawley touched a buzzer and his stenographer appeared.

"Phillips, did you get everything Mr. Briggs told me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir;" answered the young man, while Briggs looked from one to the other in bewilderment.

"Well, tear it off in short takes for all you're worth. It's a four column spread with a layout. I'll write the introduction; Mr. Briggs will close it. Git."

The stenographer vanished, and Hawley turned to Briggs.

"You brought Belle Dalton to New York, and took her to the hospital, Briggs;" he said; "and Doctor Robertson saw her and put her to bed. She then vanished and came here. I know those are facts. I also know, because the Chief of Police of Mill Vale has just told me over the telephone, that Belle Dalton died tonight at seven o'clock, while you were sitting out there on the river bank.

"That's some story, Briggs, and we've got the proofs. Get busy."

The Eternal Eve

BY ANNA M. THOMSON

Because "he drinks and plays cards" she refuses to vote for him for sheriff. But when the test comes she changes her mind which has been a habit with her sex since the beginning of time.

"THERE'S no use saying another word, Mark." Charlotte's voice was determinedly crisp, and her dark handsome eyes flashed warningly. "If I'm going to vote at all it must be as I think right and not follow blindly your instructions in the matter. Why, if every married woman," hotly, "were expected to support the candidates her husband picks out, regardless of her own convictions in the matter what's the use of them voting at all?"

"Tain't no use," growled her much-ruffled liege-lord, pushing back his plate and rising from the dinner-table. "No sensible person ever thought it *would* be."

"Oh, yes, they did," retorted Charlotte sharply. "A whole lot of them did, else we'd never have gotten it. Now see here, Mark, I've told you I'd vote for every single one on the ticket as you wish *except* this man Johnson—that's where I draw the line. Why, it's town-talk that over at Oriska he's known as a drinker, and plays cards for *money*. He's not much better than a common *gambler*," disgustedly, "while Mr. Smythe is a perfect little gentleman."

"*Perfect little gentleman!*" echoed Mark, in righteous indignation. "Good Lord! Lottie, we-all don't want no 'perfect little gentleman' for sheriff of this county. What we want is jest a plain man, one who can shoot, if necessary, and shoot straight. Can you see Archie Smythe goin' after this here Doc Lemon outfit what's be'n raisin' particular Hell over in Quinto Valley this last six weeks? *Can* you, now?"

Charlotte had flushed hotly at her husband's ridicule—she had not meant to use the phrase she had employed, although Mr. Smythe, who was now running for sheriff of Laona County, with his rather dapper figure and very affable manner, had always so impressed her whenever she met him, on the two or three occasions when she had visited his furniture store (which he combined with an undertaking business) in the town of Danby, a distance of some six miles from the Curtis ranch.

"Quinto Valley's a different proposition from *this* section of Oregon," she answered. "Nothing ever occurs around here that Archie Smythe couldn't manage with one hand tied—besides, he can appoint deputies if necessary."

"That's what Archie's countin' on—or he wouldn't have be'n so anxious to run!" stated Mark with conviction. "And don't you be so dog-gone sure about nothin' ever happenin' in this county—it's been peaceable enough fer nigh two years now, but before that we had some mighty ugly fracasses. You got to remember this ain't New England."

"I *do*," Charlotte retorted, "but nevertheless, I'd rather trust to a sober, conscientious man in time of need than a

card-playing, whiskey-drinking roisterer, such as they say this Johnson is. Besides, Mark, I don't think it is either right or fair for you to try to influence me in this way. A woman should have the right to vote as her judgment and conscience dictates—not as her husband orders," loftily. "Anyhow, I promised Mrs. Strickland when she called here the other day I'd support Smythe, so I've got to do it."

"*There's* the milk in the cocoanut!" ejaculated her husband warmly. "You promised Mrs. Strickland! Mrs. Strickland's the head of this here Woman's League, ain't she? *and* aunt to Smythe's wife. There we've got it! Well, all I've got to say is," thrusting his hat down angrily, over his crisp, brown hair, "that it's damned ungrateful and disloyal in a woman to take the say-so of an outsider against the opinion of her husband in a matter like this!" and Mark left the cozy living room, banging the door behind him.

In a short time Charlotte, washing dishes at the kitchen window, saw him drive off toward town in the buckboard —saw him through a sudden mist of tears, for this was the first time, since their marriage over a year ago, that he had left her without a goodbye kiss.

Charlotte Curtis was not the woman, however, to give way to maudlin sentiment—as she would have termed it. She felt bad over this first quarrel of her married life, but she was convinced in her own mind that her position was correct. All the blood of her New England ancestors upheld her in resenting coercion where a principle was involved, while her whole early training had taught her to distrust those who indulged in strong waters or handled cards for money.

Charlotte's mother, coming from her home in Vermont, to teach school in the far West, had there met and married the man of her choice, given birth to her baby girl and died, all in the space of two years. The young father had taken clumsy, but infinitely tender care of the tiny maiden until she was nearly seven, assisted by the big-hearted wife of a ranchman for whom he acted as foreman. Then he had met his death in a Fall round-up, and Charlotte had been sent East to enter the family of her mother's half-brother—a man old enough, nearly, to be her grandfather—a deacon in the church, and leader of the temperance movement in his home town. He had taken pity on the child's orphaned condition and, though cold and unapproachable by nature, had intended to treat his little niece kindly

Here she had grown up in a strictly conventional manner, attending school and church regularly and, for amusement, going to the lectures and concerts at the Lyceum or sewing circles among the younger church members. Yet she never forgot her handsome young father, and as the years passed he was enshrined as something very like a saint in her girlish heart.

Then she met the good-looking, swaggering young Westerner, Mark Curtis, who promptly fell desperately in love with the pretty and demure little lady, and finally persuaded her, against the bitter opposition of her relatives, which seemed absolutely groundless, to marry him and go with him to his home in Oregon.

They had been ideally happy during their short married life. The little ranch was prospering, and things were running "on velvet" until this disagreement over Charlotte's first vote had arisen—then her youthful prejudices had been aroused and she was now fully determined to keep the stand she had taken.

She busied herself untiringly with her household matters this afternoon, doing many things that might have rested for

another day, so as not to dwell on the unhappiness that she seemed to feel would pounce upon her once she was idle.

The place had never seemed so deserted and lonesome before. The three men employed by her husband were off chopping wood for the winter's house supply, and would be for a good two hours yet. Even Shep, the big watch-dog, had taken it upon himself to go off for a visit. The nearest neighbor lived nearly two miles away, but Charlotte felt not the slightest fear at being left alone, everything was safe enough—she felt only an unaccountable loneliness.

The autumn afternoon was drawing to its early dusk when, having finished her tasks, she threw on her crimson sweater, and taking a pan of corn started out to feed her hens. As she stepped onto the back porch she had the impression of having seen a figure dart into the partly-open door of the barn. Thinking it might have been one of the men returned she went on scattering the corn to the flocking fowls.

Remembering suddenly, that Mark had told her to get one of them to fix the padlock on the door of the barn, as he was now stabling Calumet, his newly purchased and valuable stallion, there. She set her bowl on the ground and crossed the intervening space. Standing at the door she peered into the dimming interior.

"Oh, Charley!" she called tentatively. "Lew! Cal!" Receiving no answer she stepped over the sill and crossed to the ladder leading to the loft, thinking that, if one of them *had* come in, he might have gone up there for some tool.

Calumet, hearing her voice, whickered shrilly. She turned her head and met the gaze of a pair of glittering, bloodshot eyes peering out at her from the gloom of the stall next to that occupied by Calumet. The owner of the eyes, seeing that he was detected, stepped lightly forth and placed himself between Charlotte and the entrance. He was a small, muscular man, young, but with a dark, brutally sinister countenance and a marked cast in the left eye. At Charlotte's quick cry of fright he gave a short laugh as if he enjoyed her terror, although he flung a hasty glance over his shoulder to make sure it was but a lone woman with whom he had to deal.

"What do you want here?" demanded Charlotte, struggling to appear calm.

"I am going to borrow a horse," he replied coolly.

"*Steal* a horse, you mean!" flashed Charlotte indignantly.

At the word the man ripped out an oath, and as the girl attempted to pass him he seized her and thrust her violently back.

"You stay here!" he snarled. Then his eyes flashed about the barn, finally resting for an instant on a rough closet at one end, beyond the ladder leading to the loft. "Ah, my cheeken, you will rest in there until I have departed," he murmured impudently. He then caught Charlotte firmly by the arm and started to drag her over toward the closet. Now Charlotte was no weakling, and right sturdily she fought her ground step by step. Once she let out a blood-curdling shriek, but instantly the man's hand was clapped over her mouth and she felt a cold circle of steel pressed to her temple. "One more noise like that," he hissed, "and—" an added pressure of the pistol finished the sentence.

Finally he got her to the closet, pushed her within, closed the door, turned the buckle, and Charlotte was a prisoner in a very compressed space.

"You make one sound," he warned her, "and I shoot through the door."

Through a crevice she watched him quickly lead Calumet out, select a saddle, then—

"Drop that saddle—*also* that gun!" said a quiet, almost drawling voice.

The Mexican turned with a yelping cry toward the entrance, from whence had come the command voiced in a tone which, though almost gentle, yet held some peculiarly compelling quality.

"You!" he gasped, as his eyes encountered the tall, gaunt, slightly-stooped figure whose bronzed and weather-beaten features were scarcely discernible in the fast-falling evening shadows, then quick as a flash his arm flew up, and his gun pointed straight at the newcomer.

"Drop it, Romero!" ordered the calm voice again, and the Mexican found himself gazing at a steely object pointing straight at his heart. Slowly he lowered his arm and, with a terrible imprecation, let the gun fall to the ground.

"Now throw up your hands, son, and back into yon stall," ordered the newcomer, advancing with leveled weapon, while the younger man, still cursing, retreated before him. Stooping suddenly, he recovered the pistol which Romero had let fall. With a glance he assured himself that it was fully loaded, then, with a chuckle, he displayed to the furious Mexican his own "gun"—merely the mettle handle of a big jack-knife.

"Caught you napping that time Romero, my boy!" he remarked pleasantly. "Now we'll just let the little lady out of that pen, but first you can stow that line of gab, Mex!" the outlaw had never ceased raving in blasphemous, ribald oaths, partly in Spanish, partly in English. "Cut it out, now," and the tall man advanced with something coldly menacing in his bearing. When the other had sullkily obeyed, he moved lightly backward, still with leveled pistol, and turning the buckle released the door behind which Charlotte had been a startled spectator, through the crevice, of all that had transpired. Now she stood facing her deliverer in wordless relief.

"Not hurt, are you ma'am?" he politely inquired.

Charlotte shook her head, while her eyes flew in loathing to the stall where crouched the prisoner.

"He intended to steal Calumet," she said quickly. "Oh, you can't *tell* how frightened I was!"

"I reckoned you might be a leetle might upset when I heard you—call out as I rode by," he replied dryly. Charlotte gave a weak little smile as she remembered the volume of sound she had evoked when she "called out." The stranger seeing this, grinned back frankly as he said:

"You jest step back to the house, ma'am, and I'll remain right here, so's our friend won't get lonesome till some of the men-folks turn up, then we'll *escort* him into town."

"The men are coming now," Charlotte exclaimed, "I hear them. My husband, Mr. Curtis, will be back shortly; he has only gone to town, but you must surely wait to see him, he will want to thank you and our men can take care of this fellow. Please, *please* don't go!"

"Don't often have much trouble nowadays 'round here with hoss-stealin'," remarked Charlotte's deliverer. It was an hour later; Mark had returned from town and hearing of his wife's adventure, insisted that the stranger should join them at supper. They were now seated around the lamp-lit table enjoying Charlotte's hot biscuit, fried ham, potatoes and coffee, while the men carried on a brisk conversation. Charlotte had had little to say since their guest had introduced himself simply as Mr. Johnson. She sat with downcast troubled gaze fastened on her plate. She had never seen the other candidate for sheriff but something told her that this was he—aside from a quizzical gleam

she had caught in the eyes of her husband.

"This scamp," continued Johnson, "this scamp, Romero, ain't been long in these parts, but even so, he's been in one or two ugly messes before. He's heard about this here Calumet hoss, and like as not's been noseyin' around a day or two to get a chance to light out with him. Hoss stealin'," with a faint sigh, "ain't nigh as common as it once was. Back in Californy, say twenty years ago," reminiscently, "we-all used to have some lively skirmishes interruptin' the progress of some gent," humorously, who'd taken a fancy to a certain hoss belongin' to another party. I remember a chase me and five or six of the boys from the Sandy Bar ranch had once after a son-of-a-gun named Belt Kinzer, that took us over five counties. Kinzer had lifted seven of our best hosses and was makin' for the border as if the devil was after him. When we got up to him there was just me and my side partner, Charley Quintis, left, but," grimly, "we was a-plenty to polish off Belt's score right immediate."

"Charley Quintis!" ejaculated Charlotte. She had started violently at the name, and now leaned forward, her eyes wide with surprise, fixed on her guest. Mark also turned interestedly toward him. "Did *you* know Charley Quintis in California?" she asked excitedly.

Johnson was helping himself to some more apple-sauce.

"Well," he answered composedly, "if *I* didn't know him I don't reckon nobody else did. When I first met up with Charley," he continued, not noticing the agitation of his hostess, "I'd jest come West, from my home in Michigan. I struck Thurston on a Fourth-of-July, and the boys was celebratin' a bit —roamin' up and down the one street of the little dog-town, in one saloon and out another, and between whiles using their side-arms mighty promiscuous. I'd never seen shootin' goin' on that way before, and I don't mind sayin' I was some flustered. I scooted along, and finally rounded up among a bunch o' men who were gathered around a mighty good-lookin' young feller about my own age, who had a little table in front of him with a deck o' cards. He'd take three cards up in one hand, flash 'em before the eyes of the crowd, give 'em a whirl, then, when you'd have staked your life you knew where a certain card lay, he'd turn it over with a laugh, and it would be one of the other two. He sure was takin' in the mazuma *that* day.

"I've met up with a good many men in that line since then," continued Johnson, with a reminiscent chuckle, "but, for a first-class, number one, three card monte thrower, and with the brightest, best-natured patter, I'd have to hand it to old Charley Quintis—and he played the game mighty near square, too," he concluded.

"Three card monte!" gasped Charlotte, under her breath. Her face went first white, then red, but Johnson, evidently deep in thoughts of the past, failed to note her agitation or the embarrassment of his host, but continued as he smoked placidly the cigar the latter had given him:

"That very day Charley helped me out of a scrape. Three or four drunken cowboys started in to have some fun with 'the tender-foot'—that was me. It got too rough to suit me; I lost my temper, and pretty nigh killed one of 'em. I was a husky youngster in them days. The others came for me but Charley Quintis happenin' along, dragged me into an empty shack, bolted the door, then we both slipped out a window in the rear and got off while the drunks were still busy at the front. We left town after dark, and that was the

beginnin' of a friendship that lasted for years. Poor old Charley! he was a good sport."

"What—what interrupted your friendship?" asked Charlotte, her face pale and her voice low and hesitating. Mark cast a quickly withdrawn glance at her.

"He got married," stated Johnson. "Married a young schoolma'am—from Boston, I think. They had one kid named after its dad—he thought th' wan't nothin' like his 'little Charley.' He swore right off drinkin' after the baby came. Then the mother died and that boy jest settled down an' devoted himself to the raisin' o' the kid. I kinda lost track of him after that—I went down to New Mexico—and next thing I heard poor old Quintis was dead."

Charlotte got up, and coming around the table, seated herself beside the big, rugged stranger.

"Were you," she asked earnestly, her face quivering with emotion, "the Buck Johnson who was with—Charley Quintis the time he was lost for days on the Mohave desert? Were you the man who, when his horse gave out, and he himself, hurt from the fall when the animal dropped, and almost delirious from thirst, put him on your own horse and trudged through the burning sand beside him until, when *that* horse gave out, and Charley begged you to leave him and try to get out yourself, you refused, and when he dropped into sleep or unconsciousness, you managed to get him on your back and crawled along until you fell exhausted—and were rescued by some horsemen just in time. Are you *that* Johnson?"

The man sat gazing at the speaker in open-eyed astonishment until she had finished.

"Well, in the name of Old Harry!" he broke out amazedly. "How did you find all that out?"

"Because," answered Charlotte, "Charley Quintis was my father; I am his daughter, Charlotte, whom he always called Charley."

Johnson stared at her a moment, then seized her hand warmly.

"Charley's kid!" he exclaimed. "Little Charley Quintis. I sure am glad to meet you—ma'am, but I thought—I really thought you was—that is," confusedly, "I thought the child was a boy."

"Father kept me with him until he died, when I was seven, and raised me as if I were a boy," Charlotte explained. "He often and often spoke of his chum Buck Johnson, and I delighted in hearing of your being lost together on the desert, and how brave you were. Oh, I'm so *glad* to have met you," and Charlotte gave him a look that brought a little mist into the grey eyes of the man.

That night, as Charlotte and Mark stood on the front porch in the bright moonlight, watching the departing figure of their guest as he rode off on his big, black horse, he having been forced to leave on account of attending a meeting in town, Charlotte slipped her hand into that of her husband and, as he drew her close to him she whispered:

"Mark, dearest!"

"Yes, honey."

"Women often change their minds!"

"So I've heard."

"Well—I've changed mine."

"Have you, dear?"

"Yes, I'm going to vote for Buck Johnson."

And Mark, though young, was wise with the wisdom of the serpent and made no triumphant rejoinder, but as they entered the house the thought flashed across his mind that it was a pity Charlotte's father hadn't lived. "Pa Quintis must have been a 'sure enough sport.'"

The Death Gamble

BY WILDER ANTHONY

Here is the story of a game of draw poker and the stakes were death. But a keen-eyed sheriff held the best hand.

THE dead man lay face upward on top of a round table, his outstretched legs dangling from the knees down. One hand still clutched several cards, the other was clenched across his breast. He was apparently about forty years old, short and thickset, and he seemed to smile in a ghastly way at the living occupants of the room as though in death he jeered at them.

Four men were grouped around the body. Three of them, two whites and a giant negro, gazing in speculative silence at the actions of the fourth. This latter was a nervous little man, wearing thick eyeglasses and a natty blue suit. Behind the glasses, his blue eyes showed keen as needle points, while his slender, beautifully kept fingers were rapidly searching the pockets of the corpse. A very small gold star on the bosom of his white-silk shirt proclaimed him a sheriff.

At last he finished his examination of the dead man's effects, having brought to light an assortment of articles which he piled on the table beside the body and scattered cards, and without saying a word he crossed the room and sat down.

The two white men stirred uneasily—they never could get used to Sheriff Parker's manner,—it made them fidget; but Big Jase, the negro, showed no emotion, his black face as expressionless as ebony; he did not move a muscle, although his eyes never left the sheriff's face. He had the air of a man who waits for orders.

In a calm, precise tone, dry as dust, the officer began to speak, addressing the taller of the white men.

"Let us," he said, "review the case once more, Stevens. Such facts as we know are these: This man, Jim Crawford, well known to us all, died here about three hours ago, while playing draw-poker. The end came suddenly and very quickly. According to eye witnesses, yourself among others, he was seized with convulsions and died a few minutes later, just as Doctor Morse"—he glanced at the other white man—"came in response to your summons. That's about all we actually know, isn't it?"

"Yes," John Stevens, proprietor of The Jolly Dog, affirmed emphatically. "We all thought Crawford had cashed in natural, until Doc, here, said not. For myself I can't understand it."

The sheriff smiled and turned to the coroner.

"Tell us, Doctor," he asked, "just why you think that Crawford was poisoned?"

"For various reasons," Doctor Morse answered. "When I first arrived I found the deceased in the last throes of a series of convulsions which, the spectators told me, had seized him less than fifteen minutes before. The man was too far gone for me to do anything more than ease his suffering, but from the first I was suspicious. I have had considera-

ble experience in poisons, and a number of symptoms in this case make me quite certain that Crawford died as the direct result of some very powerful alkaloid. The symptoms were unmistakable, Sheriff."

"Very good. Accepting your statement at its face value until an autopsy can prove or disprove it conclusively, we will proceed to the next point. Jim Crawford being poisoned, who did it and how?"

Stevens glared a little angrily. "Now see here, Sheriff," he argued; "the thing ain't noways reasonable. Crawford was here since four this afternoon—he neither drank nor smoked in that time. Half a dozen men can swear that not a thing went into his mouth, so how could he be poisoned? Doctor Morse is mistaken, I tell you."

"Possibly," was the dry retort; "but that is to be proved. Doctor Morse as coroner, and I as sheriff of this county, have our duties to perform. A man has died in one of three ways: naturally, by his own hand, or by the hand of another If murder has been done we must prove it and bring the guilty to punishment."

With a helpless shrug of his shoulders, Stevens subsided. Long acquaintance with the sheriff had taught him that it was useless to protest when the other took that tone. In appearance Herbert Parker was as mild a man as ever lived; as a western peace officer a stranger might have called him a joke; but residents of Elktooth knew him for the most efficient sheriff in their history.

"Jase," the sheriff remarked to his huge servant, "gather up those cards and bring them to me, particularly those in Crawford's hand."

Noiseless as a shadow the giant obeyed, while Doctor Morse and the gambler eyed him curiously. They knew that Jase was both deaf and dumb, and his way of reading his master's lips seemed to them almost uncanny.

When he received the cards, Parker shuffled them and ran them through his fingers in an abstracted fashion. He seemed to be thinking profoundly about something a thousand miles away, although a close observer might have noticed that he examined each bit of pasteboard very carefully. At length he tossed the pack on to a nearby table and stood up.

"Who played with Crawford?" he asked Stevens.

"There was three others in the game," the proprietor replied, "but it was really between Crawford and Fred Moller. They did all the big betting between 'em."

"Who won?"

"They broke about even for the most part, but Crawford had the best luck, if there was any choice."

Sheriff Parker made no audible comment on this reply; he seemed hardly to notice it. Sunk in thought, he merely walked toward the door, followed, after a moment, by the physician and Jase.

It was about midnight, and after they left the saloon and gambling house the three men found themselves on an almost deserted street. In silence they walked the half dozen blocks that separated them from the jail and the sheriff's office. After Jase had lighted up and brought cigars from a little cupboard, he went to his own quarters, and the two friends were left alone. For awhile they smoked thoughtfully.

"Horace," said the sheriff, at length, "it's a queer business—this Crawford affair. There's more in it than appears at first sight. Have you a theory?"

The coroner grinned.

"Why do you ask that, Bert?" he parried. "You know mighty well that my theories always make you smile. You invariably prove them wrong."

"Not always," chuckled the little officer. "You flatter me. I'm really seri-

ous this time. Barring the fact that Crawford was undoubtedly poisoned, I have mighty few definite clews to work with."

Doctor Morse looked up with a start.

"Undoubtedly poisoned," he repeated in a tone of surprise. "Do you mean that literally? If so, how do you know? I'm not sure myself, remember, and won't be until I have had a chance to test my diagnosis by an autopsy."

"I don't think a post mortem will be necessary in this case," Parker rejoined. "Jase!" he called, before the doctor could say anything more.

The big negro appeared—he had been waiting in another room from which he could see his master's face without being in sight himself, and the sheriff, speaking slowly, directed him to go to the rear of the jail and get a stray dog which was confined there in the pound.

When the dog—a small terrier—had been brought to him, the sheriff took something from his pocket and rubbed it across the little animal's moist tongue. Doctor Morse was somewhat startled when he observed that this object was a common playing card—a king of hearts.

At a nod from his master Jase dropped the terrier, which shook itself and lay down in a corner. The physician, by this time beginning to guess what would happen, watched it curiously. He had not long to wait.

The dog suddenly became uneasy. It got up and walked around the room a few times. Then it lay down again and began to breath jerkily. In five minutes more, after a few struggles and kicks, it was stone dead.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the coroner. "You don't mean to say, Bert, that that card was—"

"Poisoned and used to murder Crawford, yes," Parker interrupted. "I was pretty certain of it when I noticed that varnish-like substance on its edges and I palmed it right under Stevens's and your noses so that I could make this test. You can see it for yourself." He held out the card for inspection. "Crawford was one of those card players who constantly wet their fingers while handling the pasteboards, you know. It's rather a common habit, Doctor."

"Great Heaven, yes!" Doctor Morse ejaculated. "The thing is positively diabolical, Bert. Just think of a man sitting into a game and having a thing like that dealt him. It might happen to any one. I—" He broke off with a shudder of horror.

"Now that we are reasonably certain of the means employed by the murderer," the sheriff went calmly on, "the next step is to find the man himself. It's no common crime, Horace. The thing denotes a great deal of ingenuity. The murderer planned each step very carefully. He knew, as do any number of frequenters of the resorts where Crawford was in the habit of playing poker, that his prospective victim wet his fingers a great deal. The dead man was a professional gambler, you know: he played cards every night, and the opportunity for studying him was unlimited. So much for that. Now who did it?"

"I'm blessed if I know." Doctor Morse looked puzzled. "It might be any one of a dozen or more. There's Moller, for instance. He was Crawford's opponent at the time, and we both know that there has been bad blood between the two men for years. They never spoke except at the card table, where they met purely on business."

"True; but we mustn't be in a hurry. You know my method of always trying to eliminate the speculative in favor of the logical in these matters. Moller could have done it—he is a card expert, and he hated Crawford, but he is only a possibility. A dozen others had the same chance he did. The pack which

contained that card was a new one of the regular house variety. Stevens has his cards made in quantities, you know, all alike on the backs, and a new deck is furnished for each game, or at any time during a game that a player calls for it. This card must have been obtained and prepared in advance and slipped into the pack by some one. That's logical, isn't it?"

"Of course; but it leaves us a mighty wide field. "You've already said that any frequenter of the gambling houses who knew 'the ropes' might have done it."

"I'll qualify that statement a little, Horace." Sheriff Parker removed his glasses and wiped them, while he smiled quizzically at his friend. "The thing is a little bit deep for the ordinary type of man in these parts. The fellows here, as a rule, are more apt to put an enemy away with a gun or knife than to employ the very subtle means used in this case. Let's go back a little. It's solving puzzles like this which makes this business of ours interesting—we mustn't jump at conclusions.

"For a long time the gambling element in Elktooth has been reading the handwriting on the wall. The day for legal gambling is about over here and the gamblers know it. I've fought them tooth and nail for months, as you know, and very naturally they dislike me. It will soon be election time and I shall be a candidate for re-election to my present office. Given the opportunity, I mean to close every resort in this town, and the gamblers are fully aware of the fact. All of them would do anything to beat me and elect Hovey, who is one of their own kind."

Doctor Morse frowned in perplexity when he paused.

"You're right about that," he agreed, "but I don't see what it has to do with this murder."

"Nothing, perhaps; but we mustn't be too sure. Crawford, although a gambler himself, was 'in bad' with the powers that be, among his own set. They distrusted him, and with reason, for several times his jealousy of certain men whose names I won't mention, caused him to give me information that helped materially in getting convictions."

"Ah!" The coroner looked up in surprise. "I didn't know that. Surely you don't think, Bert, that John Stevens--"

"There you go again," grinned the sheriff, "jumping at conclusions as blindly as a trout after a fly. I haven't mentioned Stevens's name, although I admit that he is probably rejoicing at this moment over the fact that Crawford's mouth has been shut for good. Still, we have no proof against him, Horace. It might be some one else."

"Possibly; but who? Could it be Fred Moller? But we've already discussed him. Nevertheless, I'm inclined to think that he was in it."

"He's a possibility," the sheriff vouchafed, "but not a strong probability. Guess again."

"No use." The coroner shook his head. "I could guess all night, Bert, and not make a bullseye. Why don't *you* try? I've an idea you know the man at this moment."

"Oh, no I don't, although I hope to before long," the sheriff laughed. "Let's move around a bit, Horace. Our man is more likely to be in evidence right now than by daylight. Gamblers are owls, you know, and I have a little scheme to try. Nobody guesses how much we know as yet. I got that card out of the pack without any one seeing me, or guessing that I knew what was on it. Let's strike while the iron is hot."

For over an hour the two friends, followed as usual by Big Jase, wandered from one all-night resort to another. In

each place the little sheriff mingled with the crowd, quiet and unobtrusive as always, although it was noticeable that a certain restraint fell upon the inmates of the resorts that he visited. Everybody knew him, and the tough, hard-bitten gamblers and "sporting-men" respected and feared him, harmless as he looked, far more than any blustering, gun-fighting officer who had ever ruled them. They knew that those mild eyes behind their screening glasses missed nothing that went on, and that the little man's courage was as deadly as it was quiet.

News of Crawford's sudden death had already gone abroad, and it was being discussed everywhere. Many made no denial of the fact that they did not miss the gambler, while others, more careful in their speech, showed by their looks and the covert glances they shot at the sheriff that they wasted no sympathy.

After visiting every resort in Elktooth, and idling about in an aimless way, the three men returned to the Jolly Dog. By this time Crawford's body had been removed, and the games were all going again as though nothing had happened to break the ordinary routine. Nowhere is a man's life held cheaper than among those who live by their wits.

John Stevens was not in sight—he had gone home, the bartender said; but a slim young fellow in silk shirt and broad-brimmed Stetson, came forward with a smirk as the sheriff entered.

"Hello, Charley," the officer greeted casually. "How's tricks?"

"Pretty fair," Greek Charley, Stevens's head man, and the smoothest faro dealer in the state, grinned affably. "Anything I can do, gents?"

"Nope," answered the sheriff; "we're just killing time." He passed on, mingling with the crowd that watched the various games, while the faro dealer, his dark face inscrutable as a mask, went about his duties.

At present, there being no faro game in progress, these seemed to consist chiefly in supplying the wants of the poker players. There were six games going on, four men at each, and the Greek divided his time between them and the safe which stood in one corner of the room. From this, as needed, he took the chips and cards with which the games were played, and placed the cash equivalent thereof back in the safe. His lynx eyes were everywhere, darting about the room in shifty jumps; not a thing escaped them no matter how busy their owner might be.

Sheriff Parker quietly moved about, pausing near each table to watch a few hands played, with no apparent object in life other than to while away a few idle moments. His presence beside the safe, just as a losing player called loudly for a new pack of cards, seemed wholly accidental, and he watched languidly as Charley swung back the heavy door and reached inside. Just as the Greek tore the paper covering from the pack and started to move away, the officer stooped quickly and picked up a card from the floor.

"Here, Charley," he said, "you dropped one." And he presented the colored pasteboard to the attendant, face up. It was a king of hearts.

As his eyes fell on the card in the sheriff's hand, Greek Charley's swarthy face turned almost green. Even a lifetime of training in his profession had not made his iron nerves proof against the shock the sight of the card gave him. The unexpectedness of the thing—just what Parker had counted upon—caught him with his guard down for a second; in the next, his face resumed something like its natural expression, and he extended his hand.

"Thanks," he said. "I didn't notice."

The sheriff smiled as he pocketed the card gain.

"Well done, Charley," he commented. "Your nerves are good. Let one of the boys take charge here and come with me. I want to talk with you."

The Greek's snaky eyes narrowed, and for an instant he seemed on the point of making a bolt; but he evidently decided that the attempt would be useless. In response to some secret signal from his master, Big Jase had appeared at the gambler's side as if by magic, and the negro's catlike agility and tremendous strength was a byword in Elktooth. With a faint shrug of his shoulders, Greek Charley turned away with the officer.

Nothing more was said until the little party reached the sheriff's office. Here Parker came directly to the point.

"Tell me the truth, Charley," he ordered, "and be quick about it. Who doped that card for Crawford?"

Gambler by nature and profession, Greek Charley tried to bluff. He was caught and he knew it, but he intended to play his hand as long as he held cards.

"What card?" he demanded, as brazenly as he dared. "I thought you—"

"Cut that!" Sheriff Parker's tone was short and crisp. "I know your game, Charley, and it don't go. Your face gave you away back there in the card-room. Unless you want me to scrag you for Crawford's death yourself you'd better tell the truth. I know more than you think, and I will saddle the whole job onto you if you don't act right."

The gambler wet his lips nervously. "Believe me, Sheriff," he whined, "I ain't that bad. It was Hovey and Stevens did it—Hovey got the dope from a squaw up on the reservation; the Injuns use it to kill wolves and coyotes, and there was a 'fixed' card in every deck Crawford handled for a week. They knew he'd get it some night, him bein' that careless about wettin' his fingers. S'help me Gawd, Sheriff, that's the truth!"

Parker nodded grimly. He had little reason to doubt the story. It dovetailed with the facts he already knew, and he felt that the faro dealer was too badly scared to lie. From the very first he had suspected that Hovey might have a finger in the pie.

"Put all that in writing, Charley," he ordered, "and I'll do what I can to get you a short term. You're guilty, but you're not as bad as the others."

He produced writing materials, and waited while the Greek wrote and signed his confession. Then after locking him up, he went out to arrest Hovey and John Stevens.

One Hundred Dollars

BY BEULAH ROBERTSON

From the comic-opera wars of South America comes this tragic story of a wife's fight for "enough money to fill the hole" and save her husband's life.

THE long line of prisoners marched wearily into the little courtroom. They all looked much alike: dingy, wellworn clothes, red handkerchief knotted at throat. Some bore scars, ghastly white against the sunburn of their faces. To the young doctor, who sat in the corner of the room, these were but the earmarks of their trade, for these men were insurgents in one of those small South American Republics where a new president is inaugurated every time his devoted followers succeed in assassinating the previous incumbent of that much coveted office. This time they had not succeeded, but being discovered in their attempt to gain access to the presidential apartments, had been captured, and now awaited sentence—for that was all their trial would amount to.

The courtroom was well filled, mostly with the friends and relatives of the unfortunate men. The day was sultry, and inside the little brick room with its low roof, the heat was almost suffocating. A breathless stillness prevailed, broken now and then by the sobs of a woman. The doctor was glad to hear those sobs, glad to know that in this country where death had grown commonplace, somebody actually cared. He lost interest in the trial while watching these women, the mothers, wives and sisters of the prisoners. They were hopeless, sordid, a few of them indifferent. They had lived in anticipation of this. It did not come as a great shock to them now. One face particularly interested him, that of the woman who had sobbed. It was a pretty little brown face, now broken by great grief, and the expression was absolutely hopeless. Chita had come to hear her husband's sentence. She knew it would be death for Jean had long been a leader of the enemies of the president. Restlessly she slipped the long braids of dark hair through her slender brown fingers.

One by one the prisoners were sentenced. When Jean's turn came he stepped forward. His face was absolutely impassive. He was sentenced to be shot to death on Saturday morning With bowed head he returned to his place; then he looked up and over that sweltering room. Eagerly his gaze shifted from one face to another until he found Chita. It was the first time he had looked at her since he had entered the room, and the look that passed between them was indescribable. Long and steadily he looked, until Chita's little brown face became less hopeless, and after a while she even smiled. "Chita would save him," he thought, "Chita had never failed him." When he had stolen gold from the mission Chita had begged enough to return it so he went unpunished; when he had had fever she had nursed him back to health, and had persuaded the young doctor to come without pay to the miserable hut under the cliff. That was when he was so ill that Chita's

skill was unavailing. But she found a way to save him then, and she would find a way now.

Chita knew what was passing in his mind but she felt powerless. Saturday morning! Why, this was Tuesday! The intervening days he would spend in the old stone prison just across the dusty street. Old Caspar was the keeper, and there was absolutely no way of escape. But Jean expected her to save him; she had never failed him, and she would not fail in the greatest of the many troubles he had brought upon himself.

That night Jean slept peacefully on the hard bench of the prison, and dreamed that Chita had saved him. Poor Chita, she had walked wearily the five long dusty miles to the little hut called home. There was no food in the house, but that didn't matter. She wanted only to think, to think of a means of saving Jean. Each day she walked back to the town to visit him, and each day she became more hopeless, more haggard. No plan could she devise by which to save him, yet still he believed that she could. She must, she must, and so the hours dragged by.

On Friday, as she was leaving the prison, old Caspar, the keeper, stopped her in the passage.

"Chita," he said, "look at that niche in the stone. Did you know it connected with the door of your husband's cell?"

Chita saw a small hole as if it had been chipped out of the stone with a sharp instrument. Inside it was absolutely smooth and could in no way be connected with the cell. Old Caspar was wicked and greedy. He delighted in the suffering he saw daily about him, and Chita passed on, thinking he had made the remark to cause her more pain. But Caspar followed and whispered in her ear:

"Once a man was imprisoned in that cell. His friends wanted to help him to escape. They placed money in that niche and the door flew open."

Chita looked at him blankly; she did not understand.

"The woods are full of insurgents One more alive or dead would not make much difference to the president."

"Oh!" said Chita. Her dark eyes opened wide, and her small hands left off the endless caressing of her braids. When she spoke her voice was tense and unnatural. "How much did his friends put in the hole?"

Caspar's greedy eyes ran over her small figure. She couldn't raise any sum before the next morning, so it little mattered how much he might say; but he hesitated with the answer, enjoying the misery in that small brown face. "A hundred dollars," he said finally; "a hundred dollars in American money might make that door open."

"Might?" she questioned.

"A hundred in the hole would open the door, but it might not get in there," and he laughed at her departing figure, but Chita had not heard the last words. With his assurance that money would free her husband, she ran out of the prison as if she might find it if she hurried.

Down the dusty street she ran, unconscious of the terrific heat or the stares of those she passed. For want of breath she finally stopped. She was now opposite the medical school and, exhausted, she sat down in the shade of its wall to consider. She must have a hundred dollars before tomorrow morning. She had not a friend of whom to borrow; and all the worldly goods she possessed would not bring a tenth as much, could she find a purchaser, which was very doubtful. But she would think of a way, and the slim brown hands pulled at the long braids more restlessly than ever. For a long time she sat there in the dust and gazed at the tall wall of

the medical school. Suddenly she jumped up, saying to herself, "It isn't honest, but I'll do it, for Jean must live."

"What can I do for you?" said the young doctor, as Chita paused timidly in the door of the hospital.

"I want to see the superintendent,"

"You look ill. Let me get something for you."

But Chita only replied, "I want to see the superintendent," and the young doctor, seeing all else was useless, conducted her to him.

"Do you ever buy bodies, people's bodies?" she said.

"Yes, we very often buy human bodies. Why do you ask?"

"I have a body to sell,—a man's body."

"How old is it?"

"About forty years."

"Oh, no! I mean how long has the body been dead."

"It isn't dead yet," said Chita, her face twitching. "My husband is sentenced to be shot tomorrow morning, and I need money, so won't you please buy his body?"

The young doctor listened to this dialogue, and felt sorry that she had come here. So she was like all the rest of these natives, caring only for money, and he had thought her so different. Once she had walked five miles in the night to come for him to help her husband when the latter was very ill, and now she was trying to sell his body before he was dead. They were hopeless, these natives.

Chita read the look in his eyes, and she was sorry that he should think so of her. "One must live," she said, "and there is no other way."

She wished she could tell him that the "one" was Jean, and not herself. But the young doctor went out as if he were disgusted, and poor Chita was left alone to make her bargain with the superintendent. He offered her a hundred dollars for the body, making her sign an order to the effect that it must be given to the hospital authorities immediately upon the execution of the sentence.

Chita did as directed and hurried away, the precious bills held tightly in one hand, and with the other she unconsciously stroked both braids of the long dark hair. She had over a mile to walk back to the prison. By the time she had opened the doors to Jean's freedom by tucking the bills away in the niche in the stone, the early tropical night would have come on, and before morning she and Jean would be far away from the reach of the prison or the hospital authorities.

She smiled as she thought of greedy, hard-hearted old Caspar. He would have no trouble with his superiors. Little did they care whether nineteen or twenty were shot down on the morrow. If one were missing, his name would not even be known. She and Jean would begin again in some far-off place. They would be happy. Still smiling, she looked up into the grave face of the young doctor, and although they passed hurriedly Chita again read accusation in his eyes. He had seen her smiling, and he knew she had the price of her husband's body in her pocket. She wished again that she could make him understand.

When Chita reached the prison she learned that Caspar had been relieved by the night keeper. How stupid of her! Why had she not thought of that? Poor Chita felt for a moment as if it were too late to carry out her plans; but no, she would not give up yet, she would come early in the morning. They might escape even in daylight. There was still a chance. Upon inquiry she learned that there was no regular hour for Caspar's resumption of his duties. Sometimes he came at seven, sometimes at eight.

The first rays of the tropical sun found

a little brown woman outside the prison gate. She was waiting for Caspar. All night she had waited, lest she be too late. The sun rose higher, and he came not. People began to resume the duties of the day, and still no Caspar. Surely it must be seven o'clock. A man drove a cart up to the gate of the prison and went inside. Presently he returned, and while pretending to busy himself with the harness watched her curiously. Chita hardly noted his presence. She was thinking of Caspar; other things did not matter. Soon a pistol shot rang out. They were trying the weapon she thought, but she and Jean would be pushing through the jungle before it should sound again. Directly the cart was driven into the prison court and then out again, but Chita's back was turned. She was looking for Caspar. Hours, it seemed, passed before he came, but really it was but a short while. She could hardly force herself to wait a few minutes before following him inside.

"There's no use in your coming here," said Caspar.

Then she showed him the roll of yellow bills, and told him there was enough to fill the little hole in the wall. The expression on his face became hideous. "You are too late," he cried. "The superintendent sent a man here an hour ago with your order for his body. Since he had brought a cart, Jean was shot at once and the body given to him. A few hours would have made no difference anyway. Get out!" His loss had made a demon of him, and he gave the woman an angry shove.

Blindly Chita found her way out into the sunlit street. Slowly she realized that the money was still in her hand—the price of Jean's body. With all her strength she flung it from her. The yellow bills fluttered to the ground. For a long time she stood motionless in the quiet street, staring, staring and seeing nothing. Then she stooped and began carefully to gather up the bills one by one. The young doctor passed, and seeing the fresh grief in her face and the scattered money, he murmured compassionately, "One must live."

But Chita saw him not.

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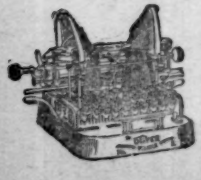

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THIS RUPTURE LOCK has no springs, no nasty unsanitary leg straps, no elastic bands, no steel bands that encircle you like a hoop on a barrel. Such contraptions are injurious and in many cases positively dangerous to health and future welfare. This **Lock** is absolutely free in action and avoids any acute pressure on the pubic bone, hips or spine, but holds the ruptured parts with that direct, steady and soothing pressure that is so essential to **promote a speedy** and lasting **cure.**

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Read What a Minister of the Gospel Writes Us

Creedmore, N. C., July 28, 1913.

Gentlemen:

I have worn your rupture lock but five months, and find that the openings are now closed tightly. To say that your rupture lock is the world's greatest invention for ruptured people is not putting it any too strong, for I was afflicted with double rupture for many years, suffering intensely all the time; was unable to find anything that would hold me, and all proved as torturous as the rupture itself, until your lock was tried, when I felt like a new man the minute it was put on, and enjoyed perfect comfort all the time I wore it. I am a Baptist minister, and am well known in this community. You are welcome to use my name in any way you think best.

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